



SCOTLAND

27 March 2012 Last updated at 11:12

Cross-border train 'hub' plans dropped

Transport Minister Keith Brown has ruled out plans for cross-border trains heading to and from the north of Scotland to stop at Edinburgh.

The plan was part of Transport Scotland's [Rail2014 consultation](#) ahead of the next rail franchise.

Mr Brown ruled out the possibility of introducing an Edinburgh change-over for train journeys between England and Inverness, Aberdeen and Dundee.

Labour said it was "a relief that common sense had prevailed".

The controversial proposal was floated in a wide-ranging consultation on the future of rail services in Scotland.

Services operated by East Coast Trains and Cross Country Trains currently run north of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Edinburgh hub

But First TransPennine and Virgin already terminate at Glasgow Central and Edinburgh Waverley.

Transport Scotland, a Scottish government body, said services north of Edinburgh were often "under-utilised".

An "Edinburgh Hub" was suggested as a way of moving passengers on to ScotRail, which runs all train services which operate solely within Scotland.

The consultation recognised "possible drawbacks" to the suggestion, including extra time added to journeys and the possibility of passengers choosing to take other forms of transport.

The Scottish and UK governments have already agreed funds to safeguard sleeper services between Scotland and England following a suggestion in the consultation to scrap them.

During a visit to Dundee, Mr Brown said: "The Rail2014 consultation set out to ensure rail users in Scotland were given a voice in how their service develops.

"That is why we listened when passengers in the north of Scotland told us they are happy with the direct service to and from England.

"Of course, I appreciate why there were concerns but it is right that we give a full appraisal of the options and then let people have their say and I am very pleased to confirm that this has resulted in the continuation of direct cross-border services for the north of Scotland."

Labour's infrastructure spokesman Richard Baker said: "We are in the ludicrous position of seeing Keith Brown travel to Dundee to rule out one of his own ideas, but it is a relief that common sense has prevailed.

"But Keith Brown has still failed to rule out other damaging changes to rail services including station closures, longer journey times and more passengers having to stand."

Mr Baker said the rail consultation had been a "shambles".

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Alex Johnstone said: "I welcome this climbdown by the transport minister that will ensure the quality of rail services for passengers north of Edinburgh in places like Inverness and Aberdeen who are travelling to and from London.

"This is the second U-turn by Keith Brown since the publication of the consultation document when proposals to scale back or end completely the Caledonian sleeper service were trumped by Chancellor George Osborne's promise of £50m to upgrade the service.

"I hope other madcap ideas outlined in this consultation will continue to be dropped."

Scottish Liberal Democrat transport spokesperson Jim Hume said: "These flawed plans would have penalised passengers and would have meant longer more complicated journeys.

"This is not a precedent we want to set as we try and encourage more people to use trains."

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