

## Sleeper trains to get standalone rail franchise

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*Caledonian Sleeper: trains will be operated by dedicated 15 year franchise from 2014*

Caledonian Sleeper trains are to be separated from ScotRail and operated as a standalone franchise.

Updating Holyrood on the Scottish Government's rail plans, transport minister Keith Brown said on Thursday (21 June) that a 15 year franchise would be let to make the most of the £100m investment in sleeper services pledged by the Scottish and Westminster governments (TB 8163).

A separate 10 year ScotRail franchise will run from 2014, including all train services currently operated by First except the cross-border sleeper, and will include a five year break clause.



Detailed specifications for both franchises will be published at the end of 2012 or early in 2013 but will commit train operators to working more closely with Network Rail as part of a deep alliance, similar to that being pioneered by Network Rail and South West Trains.

Brown criticised legislation which prevents the Scottish Government running train services while foreign, state-backed rail operators are permitted to run Scotland's trains. He said UK ministers had failed to respond to letters sent in February and May 2012 calling for Scotland to be given overall responsibility for train services. That means the franchise letting process will be similar to previous competitions although Brown said bids from not-for-profit organisations would be considered alongside train operating companies.

Whoever wins the Scottish franchise contests will be expected to offer wireless internet access on all Scotland's train services by 2019 following the pilot scheme between Glasgow and Edinburgh launched this month. Support for smartcard ticketing will also be required, although full coverage is not expected to be required until the main franchise ends in 2024.

Keith Brown said: "We will expect new operators to deliver improved journey times, increased reliability, a roll out of wifi across the network and smart ticketing systems across the country. I particularly want to see a fully integrated transport network to improve connections across Scotland and the new franchise will demand that operators ensure rail timetables synchronise with local buses and ferries and that infrastructure is in place to connect up train and cycle journeys."

He added: "Today's announcement continues to improve Scotland's railways and train services within the powers that we have. We are still stifled by the powers held at Westminster and will continue to campaign for full control of our own railways as we will then be able to do so much more."

Opposition ministers welcomed the Scottish Government's decision not to take forward proposals to close stations or curtail sleeper services at Glasgow or Edinburgh as mooted in the Rail 2014 consultation (TB 8069).

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