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Caledonian sleeper train service bidders named

Three firms are in the running to take over the Caledonian sleeper train service, the Scottish government has announced.

Aberdeen-based First Group, which already runs the service, is facing competition from Arriva Night Trains and Serco.

The Caledonian franchise connects Inverness, Fort William, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow to London.

The new 15-year franchise is expected to start in April 2015.

Arriva is ultimately owned by DB, the German state railway company which operates the largest network of sleeper services in western Europe.

Serco operates sleeper trains aimed at tourists in Australia, the government said.

Transport Minister Keith Brown said: "I am delighted at the positive interest shown in the Caledonian sleeper franchise competition and that the contract remains on track to be awarded next summer.

"The sleeper service is much more than just a rail service.

"It is a world-recognised Scottish transport icon and the Scottish government will be seeking to realise its true potential as a portal for business and tourism by making improvements that will lead to improved quality and greater value for its passengers."

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