

SPOKES *The Lothian Cycle Campaign*

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SPOKES - The Lothian Cycle Campaign response to the ScotRail Franchise Renewal Programme Invitation to Tender (ITT)

The ITT sets out the train service that the Scottish Government would like to buy on behalf of the people of Scotland. On the whole, it is an attractive vision and SPOKES makes a number of constructive recommendations below. These generally propose a shift in emphasis in favour of active travel and would be relatively inexpensive to implement.

SPOKES welcomes (with reservations as shown):

1. That the train minimum specifications are to include the innovative use of flexible storage space. This is very real everyday problem, as trains furnished almost entirely with fixed inflexible seating do not afford equality of access to Scotrail services for many legitimate stakeholder groups. **SPOKES recommends** that greater use be made, in every coach, of flexible use areas with tip-up seats that will be better suited to the different demands that occur during the day and across different routes. Such space could be used by:
 - short distance seating and standing space in the rush-hour
 - passengers with cycles
 - families with prams and pushchairs
 - golfers with golfclubs (common on East Lothian and Ayrshire trains)
 - elderly people with walking aids or shopping trolleys

If the 'flexible storage space' criterion is interpreted in this way, then passengers with bicycles and families with pushchairs or prams will in the future no longer be refused access to trains which otherwise have ample free seating.

2. That bidders must provide a cycling action plan, with proposals on actions they will take to maintain and improve cycling facilities, both on trains and at stations to encourage modal shift towards active travel and enable greater integration between rail services and cycling.
3. That bidders must propose a strategy as to how they will help to support the Scottish Government's 'Cycling Action Plan for Scotland', vision that by 2020 10% of all journeys taken in Scotland will be by bicycle.
4. That bidders must propose methods, as part of an overall marketing strategy, to promote the benefits of cycling and station cycling facilities.
5. That on-train provision of dedicated cycle spaces appears to have been extended to include all train unit types – this will be a welcome improvement to Strathclyde Electrics, as used on services via Bathgate-Airdrie, where cycles have to be stood-with in the train vestibule.
6. That there are to be 500 new cycle parking places per year across the network. See "Car parking provision" below.
7. That a better Cycle Reservation system is called for - but this must be for longer distance journeys only and not local journeys.

8. That bidders have been asked to give priced options for calls at a proposed new Winchburgh station and for train services to possible new stations at Reston and East Linton between Edinburgh and Berwick upon Tweed.

SPOKES gives only a qualified welcome to the following areas, as the language used is too weak:

For stations, the successful bidder is to:

- *ensure that* easily identifiable and accessible cycle routes are identified close to the station. **SPOKES recommends** that bidders undertake to work actively with local authorities and other groups, such as Sustrans, to achieve easy active travel connectivity to all stations.
- to *consider* the promotion of storage facilities for cycle commuters at both the origin and terminal station of their journey so that commuters have an option to secure a cycle at both ends of their journey and assist operators with on-train space management during peak periods. **SPOKES recommends** that this should include working towards Bike Hubs at large stations.
- where station refurbishments are to be made, facilities for cycle storage *should be a consideration*. Improvements to cycle parking were completely overlooked in the planning of the current Haymarket refurbishment and **SPOKES recommends** that bidders undertake that facilities for cycle storage will be integral to station refurbishment schemes.

SPOKES is disappointed that:

1. **The minimum specification for cycle carriage is only 2 cycles per train unit.** That is less than the current provision on some unit types. This is inadequate to meet even the current demand and **SPOKES recommends** a minimum of 2 cycle spaces per car/carriage for all trains, and also that there be no reduction of existing provision on any train type.
2. **Tandem carriage is not mentioned.** **SPOKES recommends** that the current Scotrail blanket ban on the carriage of tandems should be reviewed as, although demand will not be high, their use is very valuable to both families and to support groups for the blind and partially sighted. We had previously suggested a trial on the North Berwick line, but after initial interest Scotrail took cold feet citing what we believe to be spurious safety issues.

SPOKES comments about car parking provision:

- SPOKES supports the following - “Where car parking spaces for rail users are constrained by non-rail users, Bidders should propose a pricing strategy and associated management regime to address this, for example, a high charge may be levied which would be redeemable against the purchase of a rail ticket”
- However, charging should also be used to ameliorate other situations where car parking spaces are constrained. For example, a small free station car park may fill up with early-morning commuters who in fact live nearby, whilst later travellers who have much greater need to park nearby may have to use a distant or on-street location. Such problems could be reduced by a significant charge for the station car park, *thereby encouraging people who live nearby to walk or cycle to the station instead.*

- Many bicycles can be accommodated in the space needed for one car, thus catering for many more fare-paying passengers. Furthermore, the Scottish Government has a target to greatly increase cycle use, whereby it encourages people to leave their car at home. For both these reasons, **SPOKES recommends** *that cycle storage/parking places at stations should cater for all demand before spaces are allocated to car parking.*

Other points:

- Bidders are encouraged to address serious timetable gaps. These affect all passengers, including those with bicycles. For example, there are no Scotrail trains between Edinburgh and Aberdeen on Sunday evenings between 1700 and 2100, with reliance being given to using long distance services from England, which are already at capacity.
- Bidders are encouraged to run trains during the Christmas and New Year holiday periods. If all other public transport can run on these days, so should trains.

SPOKES is happy to discuss all of these points with bidders and other interested parties. Please contact:

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