



Scottish Policy Forum – Together We Can Grow – December 2014

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing more than 20,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems. ASLEF has just under 2000 members in Scotland.
2. ASLEF welcomes the Scottish Labour Party's commitment to create a not-for-profit rail network in Scotland. However the union has continued concerns over the railway in Scotland that does not come under the direct jurisdiction of the Scottish Government and hope the Scottish Labour Party continues to campaign for passengers and taxpayers in relation to the East Coast and West Coast Mainlines as well as CrossCountry services.
3. ASLEF is extremely concerned by the Westminster government's decision re-privatise the East Coast Mainline franchise to Stagecoach and Virgin. Under public hands the franchise had returned over £1 billion to the treasury (as one of only two franchises that actually made a net contribution when subsidies were taken into account) and has some of the best performance statistics on the network. Handing the service to the private sector only benefits shareholders and will be to the detriment of both passengers and taxpayers. ASLEF is pleased that the Scottish Labour Party opposes this privatisation and calls on the party to campaign to reverse this decision.
4. The success of East Coast in public hands clearly demonstrates that the railway succeeds and benefits the country as a whole when the tax payer

owns the service they contribute so much to. ASLEF therefore continues to call on the Scottish Labour Party to campaign for all services that run in Scotland to be put back into public hands. For this reason ASLEF cannot understand the SNP government's decision to award the franchise to Abellio. This will ultimately mean that the Scottish taxpayer and passengers will be subsidising the Dutch railway and fares through this state owned company. It appears that the SNP have embraced privatisation rather than using the opportunity to delay the franchise decision and use increased powers proposed by the Smith Commission to allow the public sector to bid for franchise.

5. That said, ASLEF believes Labour's policy must not be to embrace the franchising system by allowing the public sector to bid in competition with the private sector. Privately run railways are not the only issue with our railway. Part of the problem is the franchising system itself. It is costly, fragmented and not fit for purpose. The agreed wording at Labour's National Policy Forum was that "We need a different approach which puts the public interest first, reverses the presumption against the public sector...review this government's failed franchising process as a priority...legislating to allow a public sector operator to be able to take on lines and challenge the train operators." ASLEF does not believe that this should mean the public sector takes part in the extremely costly bidding process against private operators, but that it must be able to take lines on when franchise agreements end.
6. ASLEF opposes the franchise system. However since the West Coast refranchising debacle, many operators have been given directly awarded contracts. One of the supposed benefits of privatisation was competition. This is turned out to be a fallacy as the only small element of competition comes every 10 to 15 years when the bidding process takes place. Most people in Scotland have no option than to take Scotrail for most rail journeys. However the award of direct contracts to the Virgin Trains and

CrossCountry Trains for about 3 years removes even this element of competition and is simply the award of huge sums of money to these operators.

7. ASLEF therefore calls on the Scottish Labour Party to campaign for the return to public ownership for all franchises that operate in Scotland.
8. ASLEF also feels that the decision for HS2 to end in Leeds and Manchester is a mistake. Only by having a service that connects to Edinburgh and Glasgow will the full benefits of High Speed rail be felt.
9. ASLEF believes it was a mistake to separate the sleeper service from the other services within Scotland. More fragmentation leads to less cross subsidy of profitable and subsidised lines. In particular, ASLEF was disappointed to see the service handed to Serco. Serco has a long record of failure when it comes to public contracts. Serco along with G4S were recently discovered to have overcharged the taxpayer by £180m for tagging criminals with SERCO paying back £68 million. The company remains under investigation yet is still seemed a fit and proper entity to run Scotland's sleeper service by the current Scottish government.
10. ASLEF has concerns over the locomotives that are to be used on this service. The services are to be pulled by 1960s class 73s and class 92s which have a lower top speed than locomotives currently used. Class 73s have never worked to a good standard. Both of these locomotives have not been properly tested to see if they can cope with the hilly conditions on many of the routes.
11. Additionally the rolling stock will be bought from Spain despite Serco's promise to run a "distinctly Scottish" service. ASLEF believes that this shuns Scottish and British manufacturing and the contract should have been given to firms employing people in the Scotland or the UK. Examples like this show why Labour's proposed Public Interest Test is needed.

Consideration as to effects on local jobs and local economies must be considered in the award of any public sector contract.

12. ASLEF also opposes the merging of the British Transport Police functions in Scotland into Police Scotland. The transport network transcends traditional policing boundaries. For this reason it is unique in how it is dealt with and the BTP is answerable to the Secretary of State for Transport. ASLEF believes the transport network in Scotland will remain safer under the supervision of the BTP because of its unique characteristics. If this is recognised within the rest of the United Kingdom, the union fails to see why it should be different in Scotland. This matter should not become a political football. Ensuring the safety of those traveling within Scotland must be the primary concern.

13. Rail Freight is an essential part of the Scottish economy. The freight industry in Scotland is estimated to be worth over £4.5bn per year to the Scottish economy. Rail accounts for just over 11 per cent of freight tonne-kilometres in Scotland and is therefore worth around £500 million. Labour must therefore continue to support investment in the Strategic Freight Network to electrify key routes as well as ensuring gauge clearance to allow higher capacity and longer trains on paths to key ports and diversionary routes. ASLEF also calls on the Scottish Labour Party to oppose the closure of Scotland's largest power station, Longannet. The station faces closure due to the £40m cost its operator pays to connect to the National Grid. The closure of this station would have serious implications for the rail freight industry which supplies coal there.

14. Investment in rail brings significant economic benefits as well as improving quality of life and the environment for Scotland. ASLEF strongly believes that these benefits are best felt under a publicly owned, fully integrated rail network and calls upon the Scottish Labour Party to do what it can to ensure this.

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