

## CONSULTATION ON CLYDE AND HEBRIDES FERRY SERVICES DRAFT SERVICE SPECIFICATION

First Group plc is pleased to be able to respond to the Consultation on the above.

As a major public transport operator of trains and buses in Scotland, First is familiar with customer travel requirements and all aspects of service provision including timetabling, fares, ticketing structures and integration of services.

However, First has only limited knowledge of the markets being served by the ferry services of the Clyde and the Hebrides and we do not therefore offer any specific comments on aspects of the Consultation that involve local travel requirements, service levels or specific ferry operational matters.

The main area of interest that we believe First can contribute to is the issue of integration (Annex C Para 12). First welcomes the priority that this area is given and is pleased to see a high level of consensus emerging from earlier consultation processes relating to making improvements in this area.

Specifically, First would like to commend the following elements for the future tendering process:

- That a formal consultation process be required for the development of future timetables that allows the full involvement of other operators and fits with the registration and scheduling cycles of these other operators.
- In the case of rail timetable connections, this should recognise the annual timetable conferences that form the development of the national rail timetable and the dates upon which rail timetables change in the year.
- In the case of bus timetable changes this should recognise the pool of operators that may operate relevant connecting services and the legislative process that they must follow allowing a minimum of 70 days for a bus timetable change through the office of the Traffic Commissioner.
- That the successful franchisee should be charged with seeking integrated and through ticketing opportunities including the support of existing schemes and the development of future schemes. This requirement may be similar in structure to that included within the recently awarded ScotRail franchise.
- That the successful franchisee should be charged with supporting integrated information systems (e.g. Traveline Scotland) that have the support of the Scottish Executive

It is noted that these areas are already addressed to some extent in Section 3.10 of the Service Specification document, but First believes that the requirements should be more explicit as to the degree, nature and timing of the required engagement.

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Dear Mr Davidson

**FirstGroup response to Consultation Paper: Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services: Service Specification**

I have pleasure in attaching our response to the above.

FirstGroup plc as Scotland's largest bus operator and the operator of 95% of Scottish rail services is uniquely placed to understand the importance and the issues relating to integration of public transport. Only through smooth and efficient integration of timetables, information and ticketing will we make public transport accessible, attractive and a real alternative to the car for growing numbers of travellers.

Our response on the Consultation document concentrates on the importance of consultation and integration within the timetabling and route and commercial development within the proposed new franchise. We believe that it is critical that new franchise for these ferry services ensure that there is adequate co-ordination between ferry and bus and rail operators if the large public investment in public transport is to achieve its maximum potential.

On behalf of FirstGroup plc we are pleased to be able to contribute to this consultation and wish the Scottish Executive well in its plans for refranchising these important lifeline ferry services.

Yours sincerely



Gordon Dewar  
**Commercial Director**