



campaigning
by the
Railway Development
Society Limited

Networks Group

Maureen Pullen
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19th January 2013

Dear Ms. Pullen,

MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING REFORM - AMENDMENTS TO THE DEFINITIONS FOR HIGHWAYS AND RAIL NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT SCHEMES IN THE PLANNING ACT 2008

Railfuture is a national voluntary not for profit organisation limited by guarantee, and structured in England as twelve regional branches and two national branches in Scotland and Wales. The following are our brief comments on the relevant sections of this consultation document, pertaining to railways.

On the specific relevant Consultation Questions on page 18, Q1, and Q5, we would, in principle, have no objection to the revised thresholds as set out, if this enables railway modernisation and extension projects to be speeded up, and completed sooner than would otherwise be the case using the existing planning legislation.

However our main concern is the risk that this revised legislation could be used by local authorities or others to remove a section of existing railway route, which Network Rail or other former users might deem to be no longer required. If this were to enable a section of line to be removed for other development with a permanent loss of the ability to restore a rail service of some kind at a future date, then we would certainly be opposed to the use of this revised legislation to "short-circuit" the process. Although we can find no specific wording in the consultation document which would facilitate this process, and we doubt that this is the bona-fide intention or spirit of the proposed amendments, nevertheless it is a concern we would wish to address, and to seek inclusion of a clause in the documentation that the revisions should only apply to new or slightly relocated railway alignments of the length designated, but not to their permanent removal without a comparable replacement in the immediate proximity.

If you were able to reassure us that this negative possibility is excluded by the proposed alterations to the legislation, then we would withdraw any objection or adverse concern that we have expressed.

Yours sincerely

McDonald

Ian McDonald
Railfuture
Head of Networks Group

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
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