

Recast the sleepers

For a start, let me suggest the provision of intermediate levels of comfort between basic seated accommodation and expensive sleepers: reclining seats, as are commonplace on overnight trains in the US and Canada, and European style couchettes. Both these could help to earn their keep by being converted to daytime use -- probably for special excursions such as steam trains to Mallaig or Kyle of Lochalsh.

These trains should also serve a greater variety of cities in England, with one of them using the East Coast Main Line and the other diverted via Birmingham.

However, the main idea which I want to promote is the introduction of a third overnight train. The northbound service would leave London earlier and run by Birmingham, and would split into 3 portions in Scotland. One would run to Fort William in lieu of the present service, arriving early enough to connect with the morning train to Mallaig and thereby give connections to the Small Isles and Skye. One would run to Inverness via Dingwall, connecting at the latter with early morning trains to Kyle and Thurso/Wick, and the bus to Ullapool, and from there to Skye, the Outer Hebrides and the Orkneys.

There would also be a connecting service to Oban which would serve much of Argyll. To avoid people having to wake up too early this would probably be by bus from Bridge of Orchy.