

Respondent Information Form and Questions

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

ACSEF (Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future

Title Mr ☐ Ms ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ **Please tick as appropriate**

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

☐

Group/Organisation

☒

Please tick as appropriate

- (a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate X ☐ Yes ☐

- (b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis
Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available ☒

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address ☐

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address ☐

- (c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate X ☐ Yes ☐ No

- (d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate

X ☐ Yes

☐ No

Consultation Questions

The answer boxes will expand as you type.

Procuring rail passenger services

1. What are the merits of offering the ScotRail franchise as a dual focus franchise and what services should be covered by the economic rail element, and what by the social rail element?

There is insufficient information to determine the implications of a dual focus franchise. It is essential to ensure an appropriate balance between economic and social railways, to allow a choice of transport options and acknowledge the role of the service provider to facilitate access to towns and cities.

2. What should be the length of the contract for future franchises, and what factors lead you to this view?

The length of franchise is for the Scottish Government to determine. Alignment of the train leasing contract, the franchise renewal date and the network rail contract period should facilitate continuity of delivery.

3. What risk support mechanism should be reflected within the franchise?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.

4. What, if any, profit share mechanism should apply within the franchise?

If a franchisee meets and exceeds targets, there should be a mechanism in place for profit sharing. When setting targets, performance indicators should include journey kilometres, patronage, environmental and other key measures.

5. Under what terms should third parties be involved in the operation of passenger rail services?

ACSEF is not aware of any stations or other facilities which would be suitable for third party operation.

6. What is the best way to structure and incentivise the achievement of outcome measures whilst ensuring value for money?

Clear targets need to be set by the Scottish government in relation to what it intends to achieve from the franchise.

7. What level of performance bond and/or parent company guarantees are appropriate?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.

8. What sanctions should be used to ensure the franchisee fulfils its franchise commitments?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

9. Under the franchise, should we incentivise good performance or only penalise poor performance?

It would be prudent to reward good performance as well as building in penalties for poor performance.

10. Should the performance regime be aligned with actual routes or service groups, or should there be one system for the whole of Scotland?

Performance should be aligned with routes and specific services. Services to peripheral areas are frequently sacrificed in favour of performance targets related to larger cities (e.g. Glasgow- Inverurie trains being terminated at Aberdeen to reduce negative impact on later services into Glasgow).

11. How can we make the performance regime more aligned with passenger issues?

More frequent passenger satisfaction surveys and proactive response to issues raised; e.g. overcrowding.

12. What should the balance be between journey times and performance?

Overall reduction in end to end journey times, aiming for faster journey times and accepting a lower punctuality target.

13. Is a Service Quality Incentive Regime required? And if so should it cover all aspects of stations and service delivery, or just those being managed through the franchise?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.

14. What other mechanisms could be used for assessing train and station quality?

Extended and more frequent passenger satisfaction surveys.

Scottish train services

15. Can better use be made of existing train capacity, such as increasing the permitted standing time beyond the limit of 10 minutes or increasing the capacity limit? What is an acceptable limit for standing times on rail services?

Rail passengers should have a seat available to them when they travel, particularly on long journeys. The appropriate level of capacity should be provided to satisfy demand.

It is not appropriate to have a decreed acceptable standing time. Improved data and information is required on the actual levels of overcrowding/standing as current published projects seem not to provide a true reflection of the problem.

Some passengers may accept some standing in a suburban service but it is much less acceptable for longer distance routes. This issue is further compounded where passengers with reserved seating, on occasions, are unable to access their seat due to overcrowding.

16. Should the number of services making use of interchange stations (both rail to rail and rail to other modes) be increased to reduce the number of direct services? What would be the opportunities and challenges of this?

Wherever possible, the number of through services should be maintained and increased. It is not appropriate to force passengers to change trains (e.g. Dundee or Perth). However, it may be prudent to designate certain stations such as Dundee as interchange sessions and so reduce the number of intermediate stops on the Aberdeen-Glasgow or Aberdeen-Edinburgh service.

For longer journeys, journey times are of the greatest importance particularly at peak times.

17. Should Government direct aspects of service provision such as frequency and journey time, or would these be better determined by the franchisee based on customer demand?

A minimum level of service should be imposed by Government, at the same time allowing operators the flexibility to provide an increased level of service. The potential for provision of extra carriages on existing trains to improve capacity (within existing constraints) needs to be considered.

18. What level of contract specification should we use the for the next ScotRail franchise?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.

19. How should the contract incentivise the franchisee to be innovative in the provision of services?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.

Scottish rail fares

20. What should be the rationale for, and purpose of, our fares policy?

As will all services provided to the public, rail fares should aim for best value for the passenger as well as the tax payer. Fare structures should also been seen as a tool to influence modes of transport, manage demand and deliver the Scottish Government's Transport Strategy.

The issue of uniform rail fares across Scotland must be included in the Government's fare policy and the expansion of discounts to smaller stations rather than the current policy of discounts only being available from "main " stations.

21. What fares should be regulated by government and what should be set on a commercial basis? Do your recommendations change by geographic area (the Strathclyde area example), or by type of journey (for example suburban or intercity)?

Fares should be regulated at a maximum level capped by Government, but with operators able to offer cheaper fares as an incentive to use less busy services.

22. How should we achieve a balance between the taxpayer subsidy and passenger revenue contributions in funding the Scottish rail network? At what rate should fares be increased, and how feasible would it be to apply higher increases to Sections of the network which have recently been enhanced?

It is not appropriate to fares to be increased on recently improved sections of

the network. Fairness in pricing has to be demonstrated throughout the entire rail network and so discourage passengers from using the rail network.

23. What should the difference be between peak and off-peak fares? Will this help encourage people to switch to travelling in the off-peak?

The whole issues of fare pricing should be about to respond to demand and a level of promotional pricing to enhance travel at off peak times and so make more efficient use of current capacity.

Scottish stations

24. How should we determine what rail stations are required and where, including whether a station should be closed?

A full consultation with existing and potential rail users is required to explore the opportunities for additional stops and new stations. There are also possibilities for further stops at existing or new stations where trains can be extended (e.g. Glasgow-Aberdeen continuing to Inverurie-stopping at Kintore. Similar possibilities should also be considered for extending Inverness-Aberdeen trains through to Stonehaven or Montrose providing opportunities at Portlethen as well as a new station at Newtonhill and other locations as part of a much required enhanced CrossRail service.

25. What are the merits or issues that arise from a third party (such as a local authority or local business) being able to propose, promote and fund a station or service?

A trial on a new service or station, funded by the franchise operator, should be considered following full consultation with local authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and other stakeholder groups.

26. Should only one organisation be responsible for the management and maintenance of stations? If this was the franchisee how should that responsibility be structured in terms of leasing, investment, and issues relating to residual capital value?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.

27. How can local communities be encouraged to support their local station?

The franchisee should work with local companies and community organisations to offer promotional fares to and from the local stations. This must be accompanied by availability of parking for cars, motorcycles and bicycles.

28. What categories of station should be designated and what facilities should be available at each category of station?

The NESTRANS Rail Action Plan refers to three categories of stations:-

1. Aberdeen is classed as a primary level station at which all trains call and may services terminate. Aberdeen station has toilet facilities, shop and refreshments and a waiting room for First Class passengers.
2. Dyce, Inverurie and Stonehaven stations are classed as secondary stations at which all trains should stop. These should be staffed stations with indoor waiting facilities, ticket machines, toilets, catering and a retail outlet. The current proposals to upgrade Dyce station should enable this target to be met.
3. All stations, regardless of classification, should be furnished with ticket machines, electronic real-time information points, and CCTV and telephone helpline. All stations should be equipped for disabled access.
4. Car, motorcycle parking (both long and short term) and facilities of bicycles should be available at all stations.

Cross-border services

29. Should cross-border services continue to go north of Edinburgh? In operating alongside ScotRail services, how do cross-border services benefit passengers and taxpayers? And who should specify these services, the Department of Transport or the Scottish Ministers?

It is crucial to maintain cross border services north of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

1. The number of passengers currently carried on the Cross Country and East Coast services exceed the numbers that can be carried on replacement ScotRail services.
2. A figure of 68,000 is quoted as the annual number of passengers between Aberdeen and London. This figure does not include passengers between other stations and London. Equally, passengers between Aberdeen and other stations in England e.g. Newcastle are not included in this figure. Therefore this figure is a significant under representation of the importance of cross border services.
3. The consultation document quotes a load factor of 26% in East Coast services at Aberdeen, but cross-border services run at much higher volumes, perhaps averaging over 75% load factor north of Haymarket. Peak times are obviously busier and at busy times (university, Christmas, Easter and high summer) can be full.

30. Or should the cross-border services terminate at Edinburgh Waverley, allowing opportunities for Scottish connections? And if so, what additional benefits would accrue from having an Edinburgh Hub?

It is unacceptable to expect passengers north of the central belt to change in Edinburgh for cross –border services.

1. The UK Government recently accepted the case for the continuation of through trains by announcing the proposed purchase of bi-mode trains to achieve this. Passengers north of Edinburgh expect the Scottish Government to hold the UK Government to its promise to purchase these trains to ensure through connectivity.
2. As with High Speed Rail, there is a difference in requirements for the north of Scotland than for central Scotland. HSR is beneficial to central Scotland but not for the north of Scotland. The North was able to support HSR to central Scotland, at significant cost, because there was support for the North's need to access London via air and because we believed the issue of through trains had been decided with Mr Hammond's bi-mode train announcement as well as the issue of improving the Aberdeen to the central belt journey time on the existing track was being addressed by STPR. It is crucial that these commitments are maintained and delivered on.
3. Changing at Waverley is difficult and complicated . Trains to London usually from platform 2 or 19 whereas most Aberdeen trains terminating at Edinburgh tend to arrive at the platforms located in the centre of the station. Platforms 2 and 19 are a distance away from the central platforms and both have very narrow platforms making it difficult for passengers to negotiate, particularly those carrying a lot of luggage.
4. The termination of cross-border services, at Edinburgh Waverley can only be considered as a reduction in service, choice and capacity between Aberdeen and London and other centres in England.

Rolling stock

31. What alternative strategies or mechanisms could be used to reduce the cost of the provision of rolling stock?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.

32. What facilities should be present on a train and to what extent should these facilities vary according to the route served?

All train services should provide, toilets, access for disabled people, catering and a minimum level of comfort as standard. Additionally, journeys exceeding 60 minutes should have business class and quiet coaches available.

Passengers – information, security and services

33. How should we prioritise investment for mobile phone provision and / or Wi-Fi type high-bandwidth services?

Improved mobile phone connectivity and Next Generation Access wireless facility should be available on all new rolling stock.

34. How should we balance the need for additional seating capacity and retain the flexibility of a franchisee to offer first-class services if commercially viable?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.

35. What issues and evidence should be considered prior to determining whether or not to ban the consumption of alcohol on trains?

A consultation exercise should be undertaken to determine whether there is a problem on specific routes, timetabling of trains and specific issues related to the consumption of alcohol prior to boarding.

36. How can the provision of travel information for passengers be further improved?

Making better use of social media and the provision of real time information must be increased.

Caledonian Sleeper

37. Should we continue to specify sleeper services, or should this be a purely commercial matter for a train operating company?

For the North of Scotland, the sleeper provides one of the few alternatives to air travel and is an important part of travel choices for both business and leisure passengers.

38. Should the Caledonian Sleeper services be contracted for separately from the main ScotRail franchise? Or should it be an option for within the main ScotRail franchise?

More detailed information on costs and usage is required before an informed response can be made.

39. We would be interested in your views in the level and type of service that the Caledonian Sleeper Services should provide. Including:

- What is the appeal of the Caledonian Sleeper Service, and if there were more early and late trains would the appeal of the sleeper services change?
- What is the value of sleeper services to Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen and are these the correct destinations, for example would Oban provide better connectivity?
- What facilities should the sleeper services provide and would you pay more for better facilities?

The provision of a good sleeper service allows travel from city centre to city centre and an excellent alternative to an early morning flight. This alternative service is vital to the Aberdeen commuter. En suite toilet and showers within non shared rooms would attract more commuters, particularly business commuters.

Environmental issues

40. What environmental key performance indicators should we consider for inclusion in the franchise agreement or the High Level Output Specification?

This is a matter for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to determine.