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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?

Q1 comments:

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

Q2 comments:

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

Q3 comments:

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

Q4 comments:

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

Q5 comments:

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

Q6 comments:

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

Q7 comments:

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

Q8 comments:

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments:

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

Q10 comments:

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

Q11 comments:

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

Q12 comments:

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?

Q13 comments:

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

Q14 comments:

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?

I struggle with the notion that increasing standing time makes better use of train capacity mainly because is this standard really measured. And certainly from a passenger perspective, do I get a discount for standing compared to someone who got a seat. Better to make more use of the line capacity or putting on more carriages and that could be enforced by reducing standing time. If its car versus train, then anything that makes the train even more uncomfortable is just not going to work.

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?

Passengers prefer direct services. Changes inevitably mean longer journeys and missed connections

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?

If the government is subsidising a line it will have a reason for doing so and therefore on those lines it should make sure it gets value for money. Otherwise the Government should let others who understand rail operations make the service provisions- the government needs to be properly and independently advised.

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

Q18 comments:

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

I think it is very difficult to incentivise innovation unless the franchise specifies requirements that have not been previously delivered. For example advertising the Scotrail service to encourage better use on under-used lines, more integrated ticketing, village and town centre ticket offices.

Scottish rail fares

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

Encouraging more people to use the service. The Government might have all sorts of other targets e.g. environment, reduced car traffic, budgets, reduced subsidies but it all boils down to number of passengers and fares will be a key aspect. More passengers will mean more services which in turn will attract more passengers.

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)?

Monopoly services can not be set on a commercial basis. The Government

will have to step in and restrict profit levels. Where there is competition on a route then a commercial basis exists. Competition of course does exist against other modes of transport and for the Scotrail network that is predominantly the car and bus. In terms of convenience and comfort the car always wins(though in terms of relaxation it can lose depending on where you are going) and so the train fares must be relatively competitive to attract passengers. Maybe a comparison site like transportdirect.info is needed and promoted.

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?

Fares should be increased at no more than CPI. Wages and state pensions are often set by CPI. I'm not sure what an enhanced network looks like(I don't believe it's the trains) and if it's not clear then difficult to justify charging more

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?

It is possible to use shoulder fares so there could be 100%, 75% and 50% of full peak fares. As long as the time period for the 100% and 75% fares is not increased beyond the existing time period. That should give passengers options with flexible working

Scottish stations

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

A station should be closed if after every reasonable effort to encourage more passengers has been made there is still a low use. The community served by the station has opted for other modes of transport for reasons of cost, poor service etc. Closure of any station should be seen as a failure of the Operator, Government, Industry and the community.

To open a station should be just based on demand potential and an economic case made. You can wait for the local campaign to get going but these do seem to have to campaign for years or decades. However I think this could be far more pro-active. A review of population areas without a station but have a line and areas with no line and start to rank the impact of a rail connection. To resolve road traffic congestion, it maybe worth looking at the capital costs of road upgrades versus that of a reopened or new station. Development of large business and industrial parks need to consider the transport needs upfront and when to implement.

Airports should have a station and there is no excuse here, a number of airports have had lines for decades but never a station. This is one sure fired way to get people onto the trains and out of their cars. Apart from Prestwick the only other airport you can get a direct train to is Manchester!

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?

Of course there are merits in doing this and it should be actively encouraged. The more stakeholders engaged in any business the more sustainable it becomes. Also the more local involvement the more likelihood of success. But more stakeholders means more management and more difficulties in reaching agreement.

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?

How do you incentivise anyone to maintain or develop a station? Look at the dreadful state of Gleneagles station. There could be a set of minimum standards for each type of station; manned, unmanned, interchange, terminus which would address the leasing and investment aspects of an agreement. It doesn't have to be the franchisee and in one sense that might be better from the franchisee's perspective as few stations themselves generate much revenue. Maybe it's like the airports, BAA owns an airport and leaves the flying to the airlines. If you ever transfer a station's ownership make sure the property can only be used as a rail station.

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

By advertising the service in the first place- I've never seen any ad delivered into my home for any Scotrail service. Get local surveys to understand their needs of the station. Encourage local businesses to use the station e.g. selling stuff, advertising, better local info. Make sure bus links exist and are timed to the trains.

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

Station, interchange or main terminus and then rural or urban and then manned or unmanned. Then address the security and facilities needed by the passengers and staff. What interchange services are needed, travel information, next train, ticketing options. Is the station to integrate with the bus, car, boat, plane or other train as these all require different facilities.

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?

At the moment North of the central belt we can enjoy much bigger trains with better comfort, wifi and restaurant services which are not available on Scotrail first direct services. Although there are not significant numbers of trains they nevertheless will provide some competition as well as increasing the frequency of scottish intercity train services. In other words it provides the passenger with options.

If the Scottish government does not subsidise these services then it should encourage them.

I don't believe it's a case of one party specifying the cross border services. Why can't the Department of Transport and Scottish Ministers talk to each other? Perhaps there are lessons to be learnt from Eurostar.

For businesses and the leisure industry it surely would be a retrograde step to cut off direct services to the north and east of England and London from north of Edinburgh and Glasgow. And diminish hopes for regional authorities trying to promote their areas.

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?

The hub is nice for logistics but doesn't suit passengers as it is inconvenient and will increase travel times,delays and missed connections. Very awkward for advanced booked passengers and everyone with a booked seat.

It is difficult to understand the benefits; the first reaction is that it would help Scotrail by blocking out competition. But the risk might be unacceptable to some passengers who might choose the car to connect or the plane to go all the way or the bus. Either way a loss to the railways.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments:

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

Q32 comments:

Passengers – information, security and services

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

If it is a short suburban service then don't need wifi, if it's intercity then you do if you want to promote an advanced service. People need to be in mobile contact and this should be considered on all services. So that is the priority.

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?

The government should have no concern for first class accommodation. That is entirely up to the operator to meet the customers' needs in this case. The capacity levels are when appropriate set in the line service requirements.

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

How many injuries and incidents where alcohol is involved are on train services and are they across all lines or just particular ones at a particular time or associated with a particular event- football, rugby, concert, holiday. Of course if you introduce a ban it needs policing somehow and affirmative action taken publicly. At a recent Murrayfield event, a ban was in force but it

was anything but enforced. And was there any trouble? Not on my train. And of course what happens on cross-border trains. I can just imagine the announcement. 'We are now approaching Scotland please consume all your drinks and the bar is closed'! or 'We are now in England and the bar is open, please drink sensibly'!

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

All stations should have an electronic service board showing the expected arrivals particularly unmanned stations and any delay information. More information concerning connecting services.

Caledonian Sleeper

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

This has been tried and met with a lot of resistance when there was talk of cancelling which also suggests terminating all cross border trains at Glasgow and Edinburgh will not be popular. I think it would be useful to understand why this needs subsidising and focus on making the service profitable rather than discarding it. It is a specialised and almost unique service in the UK. And should be a viable alternative to early flights or additional hotels as well as providing long distance direct services. We should not have to wait for another volcanic ash explosion to boost demand. More improved facilities with more promotions and advertising should support the increasing passenger use of this service which has risen significantly recently. Cutting the number of services is exactly what the travelling public don't want and is just the beginning of shutting down the service. Better to trial Oban and Wick as additional or extension services. Now that would be some journey.

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?

I think it gives Scotrail the opportunity to provide cross border services and an opportunity to promote itself outside of Scotland and could be a core requirement. If it is an option, it may not be taken up and that would force the government to undertake a separate tender and could depending on conditions increase competition.

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?

Q39 comments:

Environmental issues

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

Q40 comments: