

### 3 Respondent Information Form and Questions

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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  Yes  No

(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

(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?

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*or*

**(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?

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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: Argyll and Bute has rail services which could be classified as both economic and more rural social services. Strathclyde has one of the largest commuter networks in the Country and it is considered that frequent rail services from Helensburgh as well as services from Wemyss Bay and Gourock which link with local ferry services providing connections into Glasgow for residents of Bute and Cowal would all fall within the economic rail element. In addition, rail services between Glasgow and Oban on the West Highland Line could currently be considered social services which are characterised by longer journey times and less frequent services.

There would appear to be merits associated with a dual focus franchise however, there is also a risk that this would allow the operator to prioritise the more profitable 'economic' routes at the expense of social routes resulting in a two-tier rail service. Rural rail services are essential to many communities in Argyll and can often be subject to seasonal fluctuations in passenger numbers which would also require to be considered if allocating services into specific categories. It is essential that less profitable rural services are safeguarded and service frequencies on such routes maintained and where feasible extended.

There also has to be greater engagement with Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships, local communities and other key stakeholders in helping to determine future service frequencies and timetables to ensure that rail services support future development aspirations. For example there are considerable development opportunities for Argyll associated with the offshore renewables sector, Argyll and Bute Council's CHORD programme and a Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) application which could all have impacts on local rail patronage. In addition, although rail services on the West Highland Line between Oban and Glasgow would probably be considered social due to service frequencies/journey times, Oban is of significant economic importance both regionally and nationally given that the town is one of the main ferry hubs on the West Coast of Scotland and also has internationally recognised

institutions such as the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS). Argyll and Bute Council would therefore welcome further discussions with ScotRail, Network Rail and the Scottish Government regarding the possibility of increasing service frequencies on the West Highland Line between Oban and Glasgow from 3 to 5 trains per day.

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

Q2 comments: The tender period should be long enough to give the operator confidence to invest in improving the network. It is considered unlikely that any operator will invest significantly in the network if the tender period is not long enough to realise a financial return. Reducing contract lengths could lead to a less competitive franchise as potential operators will be less inclined to submit tenders and this also increases the costs associated with expensive franchise bids.

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

Q3 comments: The level of risk support should be minimised to promote innovation in the industry in response to market factors. It is considered that operators could be less innovative if additional subsidy is made available to mitigate against potential risks. The profits of a private operator should not be safeguarded from an economic downturn as the franchisee should be capable of being innovative in response to changes in the market. There should however, be resilience in the event of a franchisee experiencing difficulties and parental company guarantees or performance bonds would appear to be a reasonable method of ensuring this.

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

Q4 comments: It is in the Scottish Governments interests that services are as profitable as possible whilst offering best value to passengers. The level of profit share could be directly attributed to level of investment by the operator in rail infrastructure to ensure that the operator is encouraged to improve the network and avoid asset stripping.

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

Q5 comments: The rail operating company should be responsible for the operation/management of services as introducing third party management would potentially increase fragmentation/complexity and potentially reduce accountability. It would also be more difficult to ensure that acceptable standards are achieved if there are multiple tiers of management responsible for services/facilities.

Increased engagement with other transport operators, Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and local communities/stakeholders should

however, be encouraged to achieve improved, more integrated public transport services which better meet the requirements of local communities and facilitate/encourage economic growth. There is also scope for third parties to co-fund improvements to local rail infrastructure and be involved in promoting new services and developing improved timetables on local routes.

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

Q6 comments: Incentives/outcomes should be directly focused on customer satisfaction and performance should be benchmarked against key measures such as punctuality, customer satisfaction, patronage levels, passenger facilities etc to ensure that acceptable standards are maintained. Penalties should be issued for poor performance however, incentives should also be offered to encourage innovation and investment in services. Performance should be monitored by a third party as there is a clear conflict of interest in the franchisee monitoring performance where financial penalties are involved.

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

Q7 comments: It is vital that the franchising arrangements provide resilience in the event of a franchisee failing financially to avoid services being disrupted. Parental company guarantees or performance bonds would appear to be a reasonable method of ensuring that the franchisee fulfils their contractual obligations. If performance bonds are unrealistically high then this will potentially restrict competition as only large companies will be able to meet the associated costs however, if they are too low then they offer little value to the government and protection to the customer. The costs associated with performance bonds or parental guarantees could be linked to performance with costs reducing if the operator continues to meet their obligations and the level of risk reduces.

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

Q8 comments: Financial penalties should be issued for poor performance where liability can be attributed to the franchisee to ensure that adequate levels of service are maintained. This could come in the form of fines to the franchisee or agreeing an equivalent investment in improving the network. Income received from fines should be invested back into the network or used to improve services which are underperforming. Incentives should also be offered to encourage the franchisee to be innovative and invest in the network.

Contracts should also include termination clauses to allow underperforming franchises to be replaced within the contract period.

## **Achieving reliability, performance and service quality**

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

Q9 comments: Poor performance should be penalised where this is the fault of the franchisee however, innovation and investment should also be encouraged to deliver improved, more efficient and profitable services and improve passenger satisfaction. Performance targets must be realistic whilst ensuring that acceptable levels of service are achieved. Money received through fines should be invested into the network.

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: The performance regime should be aligned with actual routes to ensure that services adequately reflect passenger requirements. For example passengers travelling short distances on commuter routes are likely to have different priorities (reliability, punctuality) than tourists and rural rail users who will generally have longer journey times (comfort, availability of seats/toilets etc). Performance targets must ensure that adequate levels of service are achieved by the franchisee and financial penalties should be incurred for persistent underperformance.

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

Q11 comments: At present only 2000 passengers in Scotland are surveyed as part of the National Passenger Surveys and this represents a tiny proportion of rail users. Additional passenger consultation/ engagement should be encouraged as part of the next franchise and this could be achieved by increased engagement with rail users groups, Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and local communities/stakeholders. Passenger satisfaction surveys on trains, at stations or online would also allow for route specific /localised issues to be identified which might not become apparent in national surveys.

A lack of integration between local rail, ferry and bus services in Argyll has been identified as an issue with passengers and there will be an expectation that this is addressed through increased engagement between operators and improved ticketing and timetabling.

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

Q12 comments: Economic development is a key focus in Argyll and Bute and long journey times/distances and the high cost of travel have a detrimental impact to the region. Tourism in particular is a key sector in Argyll and Bute

and travel is essential in this respect as visitors will only be in the region for a limited time period and therefore the ability to travel quickly, easily and reliably is essential. It should be an aspiration to improve journey times through investment in the rail network however, not at the expense of performance. In order to facilitate economic growth in Argyll, increased frequency of rail services between our towns and Scotland's key cities is considered essential. In particular increasing service provision on the West Highland Line between Oban and Glasgow from 3 to at least 5 trains per day and maintaining and where feasible increasing the frequency of services to Helensburgh, Weymss Bay and Gourrock. It will also be essential to encourage increased engagement with other transport operators to ensure more integrated timetabling/ticketing and more efficient multi-modal travel opportunities. This is particularly relevant in Argyll and to towns such as Oban, Rothesay, Dunoon and Kilcreggan that are also served by local ferry and bus services.

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: It is considered that a Service Quality Incentive Regime is required to ensure that acceptable standards of service are achieved. It may be difficult to achieve a regime which is applicable to the entire network however, some degree of consistency is required to take account of the current split in responsibility for service provision between Network Rail and ScotRail. Fines accumulated through SQUIRE should be invested back into the network.

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

Q14 comments: Passenger satisfaction surveys could be used to determine where improvements are required. Facilities should be proportionate to the size of station and passenger footfall however, minimum requirements should apply to ensure that facilities across the network are fit for purpose.

### **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?

Q15 comments: It is considered impractical to monitor/enforce the '10 minute rule', particularly on busy services. Where services are identified as having capacity constraints the operator should look at solutions such as additional carriages and more efficient use of rolling stock to accommodate demand and encourage additional patronage. The priorities of passengers will be likely to vary depending on the type of service they are using, for example availability of seats is less likely to be an issue with the majority of commuters on short

peak hour rail journeys than those using more rural routes with longer journey times. Fare increases would not be an acceptable method of controlling peak demand/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?

Q16 comments: Increased integration with other transport modes should be encouraged by introducing measures such as smartcard ticketing and reviewing timetables and it is considered that this could potentially be achieved by greater use of interchange stations. Greater use of interchange stations would not be beneficial if this results in fewer trains and longer journey times for passengers.

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?

Q17 comments: The franchisee should have the ability to be innovative in meeting/responding to customer demands however, the Scottish Government must retain a level of control to ensure that service frequencies are maintained at an acceptable level on all services.

Argyll and Bute Council would support the frequency of services between Oban and Glasgow being increased from 3 to at least 5 trains per day.

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

Q18 comments: The contract should enable the franchisee to be innovative in responding to customer demands and be long enough to give the franchisee confidence to invest in the network. The contract must however, ensure that rail services are not purely profit driven and continue to provide economic, social and environmental functions. As such, less profitable services must be safeguarded.

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

Q19 comments: The franchisee should not be shielded from changes to market conditions as operators should be innovative in responding to economic conditions and providing better value services. Financial incentives could be awarded where the operator is successful in providing more efficient, profitable services which allow the level of subsidy to be reduced. The contract length should be sufficient to give the operator confidence to invest in the network and a looser specification may allow greater scope for innovation although an element of government control will be essential to ensure that less profitable services are safeguarded.

## Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: The rail fares policy should work to increase patronage on rail services thereby encouraging modal shift from less sustainable modes of transport such as private car and reducing the burden to taxpayers. The future rail fares policy should avoid too many layers of pricing as this becomes confusing for passengers. The majority of passengers will require to travel during peak periods for work purposes and not through choice therefore the Scottish Government should look at providing increased capacity during these periods to accommodate demand rather than penalising commuters by increasing peak hour ticket prices. Increasing the differential between off-peak and peak services might encourage commuters with more flexible working hours to travel during off-peak hours however, this should not be achieved by offering more competitive off-peak prices to try encourage increased patronage on these services. Discounted tickets such as the Highland Railcard are very valuable to residents of rural communities in Argyll and provide affordable connections to Scotland's central belt thereby reducing peripherality. We would therefore urge the Scottish Government to ensure that Highland Railcard is continued by the next operator.

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)?

Q21 comments: Regulation is important to ensure that rail travel remains affordable and continues to fulfil wider objectives such as economic growth, modal shift and carbon reduction. Deregulating off-peak services has the potential to allow more innovative ticket pricing by the franchisee in order to grow underutilised services and reduce the level of subsidy required. Blanket regulation by geographic area would appear to limit the flexibility of operators to vary prices based on local travel patterns/circumstances and this will make it difficult to attract new passengers or encourage users to change their travel patterns. It is however, vital to ensure that a certain level of regulation continues to protect the best interests of passengers using less profitable rural services and also those who are reliant on rail services (e.g. commuters) and already pay some of the highest rail fares in Europe. Such passengers will be unfairly disadvantaged by large unregulated fare increases.

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?

Q22 comments: Rail services should be provided at least possible cost to the Government however, in recognising the wider economic, social and



environmental benefits of rail travel it is considered necessary that the Scottish rail network is adequately subsidised by the taxpayer. Improvements to the network should not be considered in isolation and fare increases should be spread across the network to avoid users of specific routes being unfairly disadvantaged by higher than average fare increases. Operators should be incentivised to be innovative with fares and improved marketing and timetables can help grow underutilised services to increase passenger revenue contributions. In addition, increased capacity should be provided on peak hour services where feasible to accommodate demand and maximise revenue from fares.

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?

Q23 comments: Travel patterns will generally be dictated by work requirements and, as such, it is considered that more competitive off-peak rail fares will only benefit commuters with flexible working hours or those travelling for non-work related purposes. If the Government are serious about encouraging modal shift from the private car in order to meet climate change targets rail fares must be competitive during the hours when the majority of customers want/require to travel. If rail fares continue to rise above inflation in an economic climate where salary increases are subdued and living costs rising, passengers will be driven off the rail network and into more cost effective modes of transport which will increase the railways cost to taxpayers. Increases to rail fares also affect employers, as many staff are reimbursed for work related travel. This will have a knock-on economic impact as businesses look to pass on these additional costs to consumers. As an alternative to fare increases rail operators could work with employers to promote more flexible working/travel patterns and more innovative ticketing and advertising could also be used to increase patronage on off-peak services.

### **Scottish stations**

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

Q24 comments: Social/economic factors must be considered in addition to footfall figures and costs. For example some rural stations will be subject to seasonal peaks due to tourism and although footfall at rural stations will generally be lower due to less frequent services and more dispersed populations the services provided may still be vital to the local economy by providing connections to key centres. When determining the requirement for stations consideration must also be taken of future development aspirations set out in Local Authority Local/Development Plans. Planning gain should also be considered where there is a requirement to upgrade an existing station or construct a new one to accommodate increased demand due development aspirations. In more urban settlements where stations are located in close proximity local users should be fully consulted to determine the likely impacts of closing stations. Where stations are shown to be underutilised and at threat of closure increased marketing of local services

could be used to encourage increased levels of patronage. Third party funding and volunteer groups should also be considered as a method of reducing costs particularly on rural routes where there are limited or no alternative transport services. Where station closures are the only viable solution, consideration should be given to funding more cost effective alternative methods of transport such as local bus services.

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?

Q25 comments: The rail operating company should be responsible for the operation of services as introducing third party management increases fragmentation/complexity and potentially reduces accountability. It would also be more difficult to ensure that acceptable standards are met if there are multiple parties responsible for managing services/facilities. Third parties should however, be able to provide funding for local services which would then be managed by the operator. Greater engagement with Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships, public transport operators and local communities/stakeholders should also be encouraged.

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?

Q26 comments: A single organisation would be more accountable and this would reduce complexity, inconsistency in service provision and reduce confusion for passengers. The franchisee should as a minimum requirement be required to maintain stations in the condition in which they are received however, it could be a requirement to invest a proportion of any profit generated back into the network to improve facilities for passengers. Investment should be focused around appropriate passenger requirements e.g. more efficient ticket purchasing at busy stations to reduce queuing, toilets at interchange stations, DDA compliance where possible. The responsibility of Network Rail and the operator must be more clearly defined to avoid inefficient and confusing maintenance regimes.

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

Q27 comments: Where station patronage is low increased marketing of rail services should be encouraged at a local level to promote rail services. Discount tickets should be advertised in local press publications e.g. Highland Railcard to encourage increased patronage. Volunteer groups should continue to be encouraged to undertake routine maintenance at stations (cleaning, planting etc) and incentives such as discounted tickets could be offered.

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

Q28 comments: All stations should have minimum requirements for facilities to ensure passenger safety and comfort are prioritised. Updated travel information should be available at all stations, in particular unstaffed stations. Stations should also be DDA compliant where practical. Information on station facilities such as parking, toilets, telephones, cycle lockers should be available online or on printed timetables to ensure that passengers are aware of station facilities prior to travelling. It would seem reasonable that facilities are categorised based on the primary function of routes/stations e.g. primary, interchange or rural.

### **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?

Q29 comments: Reducing journey times should be a priority to make rail services an attractive alternative to less sustainable modes of transport such as air and private car and, as such, cross border services should continue to go north of Edinburgh operating alongside ScotRail services. This will avoid delays caused by interchange and the associated inconvenience to passengers. Value to customers must also be a priority and therefore increased competition among operators should be encouraged rather than creating a monopoly for the Scottish franchisee. Where capacity is underutilised on services beyond Edinburgh and Glasgow more competitive ticket pricing should be introduced to encourage modal shift.

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?

Q30 comments: See Question 29, it is considered direct services should be encouraged and increased competition among operators.

## **Rolling stock**

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

Q31 comments: Introducing used rolling stock might be more cost effective than purchasing new trains. Where electrification is introduced on routes, diesel units that become surplus to requirements should be allocated to other routes e.g. West Highland Line that require replacement rolling stock or as an alternative to refurbishing existing trains which will eventually be replaced by electric units.

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

Q32 comments: Facilities should reflect passenger requirements based on the type of journey, distance, station facilities along routes etc. Toilets, DDA compliance and journey information should be provided as a minimum requirement however, facilities such as luggage/cycle storage, Wi-Fi etc should also be provided where possible to encourage multi-modal travel and make rail services as attractive as possible. Branding should be consistent/uniform across the network to enable units to be allocated to alternative routes where capacity is required due to seasonal peaks in demand or in the event of technical issues.

## **Passengers – information, security and services**

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

Q33 comments: It should be an aspiration to invest in mobile phone provision and Wi-Fi facilities to make rail services more attractive and encourage modal shift. This should be prioritised initially where demand is greatest such as commuter/inter-city services and following this rolled out across the network. This is more relevant to commuter routes and not a priority in Argyll.

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?

Q34 comments: A range of services should be provided to maximise the appeal of rail services and encourage increased patronage however, on routes that are subject to peak hour or seasonal capacity constraints it is important to maximise the availability of seating. This could potentially be achieved by cutting first class services when demand dictates however, the franchisee should retain the flexibility to be innovative in responding to demand for services.

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

Q35 comments: As stated previously, the services offered on trains should be reflective of the requirements of the majority of passengers. It should be at the discretion of the franchisee to decide on which services/routes to offer alcohol whilst ensuring that passenger safety and comfort remains a priority. CCTV, staff training, partnership working with the British Transport Police and a zero-tolerance approach towards anti-social behaviour are potential alternatives to an outright ban on the consumption alcohol.

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

Q36 comments: Continue to install customer information screens and public address systems at stations and on-board displays on trains. Display current travel information on the operators website and also journey planning websites such as Travelline Scotland. The customer contact centre is a very useful resource and should be retained/further developed as part of the next franchise. Smartphone apps and social media sites are a good method of providing customers with up to date travel information.

### **Caledonian Sleeper**

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

Q37 comments: Sleeper services should continue to be specified by Transport Scotland as these provide business travellers with an alternative to air travel or the private car and therefore promote modal change. The franchisee could look at offering promotions/flexible ticket packages for sleeper services to encourage maximum patronage and make these services more profitable.

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?

Q38 comments: Sleeper services should be contracted within the main ScotRail franchise as private operators will only be interested in the most profitable elements of the routes which will inevitably result in a reduction in services.

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: The sleeper service has value in providing business travellers with a more sustainable alternative to air travel and private car. The franchisee should be given the option to trial alternative/additional destinations and early/late trains as part of the next franchise as a way of potentially increasing patronage. Argyll and Bute Council would welcome sleeper services to Oban and this is considered an ideal destination given its ferry connections to the isles and local business centres such as the Scottish Association for Marine Science. In addition, there are proposals for significant investment in marine infrastructure in Oban with a view to accommodating large cruise liners in Oban Harbour, potentially increasing the customer base for rail services to the town. There are also proposals for significant offshore windfarm arrays in Argyll which would make the region a national hub for renewable energy. Oban is recognised as being of strategic importance to the future of the renewables industry in Argyll which could again increase the potential customer base for sleeper services to the town. There are also proposals to develop an improved transport interchange in Oban as part of the Council's CHORD programme which would further support the case for sleeper services to the town. Argyll and Bute Council will also continue to lobby the Scottish Government/rail operator to increase the frequency of services on the West Highland Line between Oban and Glasgow from 3 to at least 5 per day.

### **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: Some environmental KPI's could include:-

- Percentage of rail network electrified.
- Volumes of fuel consumed.
- CO2 output in tonnes.
- Increases in patronage/modal shift.
- Use of hybrid/electric vehicles (line maintenance vehicles, staff cars etc).
- Number of stations using sustainable power sources e.g. solar panels, wind turbines.
- Number of stations with facilities to promote cycling/multi-modal transport.

- Recycling/waste reduction targets.