

**Marian Austin**

## **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: Franchises need to be long enough for it to be worth companies making investments in rolling stock etc.

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?

Q15 comments: On commuter services standing should be acceptable – up to 20 minutes.

Please see comments elsewhere about using the West Highland Line south of Fort William as a commuter line (by moving the time of the sleeper, creating a fare structure to encourage return journeys and perhaps adding an extra

LOCAL train). Also more could be done to promote the availability of the Mallaig line as a commuter line.

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:

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: Fragile and remote areas need the government to direct aspects of the service.

More demand could be generated on the West Highland line south of Fort William if it was treated as a commuter service from say Tulloch or Roybridge. Currently a few people do use the train despite the system – eg if you ask the online timetable, it tells you there is no train; there are no return tickets available and no season ticket. The addition of 1 or perhaps 2 trains on this part of the route would make it even easier to use. Many people are commuting by car to Fort William from Roybridge, Spean Bridge and Torlundy (see stations section).

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?

Q19 comments:

### **Scottish rail fares**

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

Q20 comments: Firstly maximising use of services – once trains are full, they should make money. Making quiet trains more expensive will not cover their costs, it will just make them less useful.

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:

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: taxpayer subsidy is ok where it safeguards a vital network, but it should not subsidise daft bureaucracy or lazy staff or inefficiencies.

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:

## Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Having a railway station should not be such a big deal – on the continent there are lots of small stations with minimal facilities which allow people to get on and off trains. Here it seems to be mired in unnecessary regulations.

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 opening of a new railway station should be possible whereas at present it seems to be viewed as impossible.

Example: a basic platform at Torlundy between Spean Bridge and Fort William at the foot of the Nevis Range access road or in the village would allow tourists, staff from various businesses and the local community to use the train to and from Fort William. If the sleeper service arrived 1 hour earlier, it could be used as a commuter train into Fort William and there already is a service in the late afternoon.

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: One plan does not fit all circumstances so it would seem to be desirable for a basic level of station to be provided by Network rail but if individual companies/organisations wish to be able to invest/improve a station, the system should allow it. Presumably the length of the lease should reflect the commitment and investment. If a company invests in a station, it should be given a value at the end of the lease.

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

Q27 comments: I think currently most people feel powerless to influence their local station – bureaucracy and ‘health and safety’ seem to put up a wall to any hope of making changes. Give a community a person to talk to who has the power to sanction some idea or activity and they are likely to respond.

On the West Highland Line south of Fort William, if the train service (times and fares) fitted for commuters, more people would use the station. As stated elsewhere, the sleeper arriving 1 hour earlier and perhaps the addition of one more train in the middle of the day just servicing local stations would make the

infrastructure more usable.

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

Q28 comments: Remote, unmanned stations work well on the West Highland Line – as long as they are lit well and have timetables and signage which is clear (which is the case currently). Where it falls down is if the service is not functioning – a digital sign showing simple information such as whether the train is running late or cancelled would solve this. I'm not aware of a loudspeaker system being used.

### **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:

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:

## **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: Fort William to Glasgow and Mallaig line: Ability to plug in a laptop for power (and even internet connection) would help persuade businesses to use the train (and cancel out some of the disincentive of it taking longer than travelling by road).

Also the food provision on this train is good and should be kept.

## **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: Length of Journey

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: I would have thought that on commuter trains additional capacity would reward the franchisee as much as having first class. Having enough seating capacity is more important than first class. If there is no pressure on seating capacity, would there be a demand for first class? If so, then let it be provided.

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

Q35 comments: On the sleeper and on longer journeys, being able to have a glass of wine or beer is part of the experience, and it is a positive incentive to travel by train rather than bus or car.

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

Q36 comments: As suggested above – the provision of automated digital signage at remote and unmanned stations such as those on the West Highland Line would be a huge improvement. These do not need to be large – a single line saying that the train is running 10 minutes late gives

reassurance.

### **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 to Glasgow and Edinburgh may no longer be necessary, but those to the Highlands should definitely be specified especially to the West coast where there are few alternatives eg the closest airport to Fort William is over 2 hours away. Going by train during the day takes all day.

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: Scotrail have improved the Fort William sleeper service immeasurably over the last 10 years, so I'm nervous of criticising, but tendering separately might give the opportunity for an innovative approach.

The sleeper arriving in Fort William at 9.50 rather than in time for someone to go to work is due to the service being tacked on to all the other sleepers. It would benefit by arriving an hour earlier. Particularly galling as it stops during the night to waste time.

The fare structure is opaque especially the discounts and the single occupancy offer.

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 Fort William sleeper service is not only appealing, it is crucial. There are few alternatives for getting to and from London. The closest airports to Fort William are over 2 hours away by car and much longer by public transport. It is gruelling experience to travel by bus and the day train takes over 10 hours with a change of stations in Glasgow. This is a very important service. It



makes it feasible to travel between London and Fort William by public transport. It is crucial to the economy of the area.

It should not be a choice between Oban and Fort William. Both should be options even if that means having a normal service connecting to the sleeper at Crianlarich.

The sleeper service having reasonable food and drinks available consistently has improved the service and made it more appealing. Getting on the train to have a meal, a drink and then go to bed is an adventure – it is attractive to both tourists and business travellers. For the train from London to Fort William a breakfast car would be fantastic as you don't arrive until nearly 10 am.

#### Current issues

The bargain berth fares are very popular, but there appears to be only one available per Fort William train. This makes booking the sleeper for a couple almost impossible unless you do it at the station where the friendly staff sort out the intricacies of the booking system.

Single occupancy (not first class). Sometimes you can only get a single occupancy and have to pay more, even though you don't want it and you are willing to share with others of the same gender.

E tickets should be acceptable on the train. However booking system does not seem to let you book a sleeper ticket – it says they are not available.

Fares: I am aware that the sleeper is expensive to run and that capacity is limited by the current practice of putting all the sleepers together, but I do believe that there are periods when cheaper fares would be covered by being able to offer greater capacity. Bargain berths are popular and people from the west coast travel to Dalwhinnie to get on the Inverness sleeper because there are more bargain berths available on this train.

It seems bizarre that the sleeper does not run on a Saturday. The fact that it is more expensive on a Friday and Sunday would indicate that there is demand for weekend travel – why not on a Saturday. Eg if you book a ski holiday abroad, you will fly back into London on a Saturday, but cannot get a sleeper back to Fort William. Why not? If you book a selfcatering week in Fort William, you cannot return home to London by sleeper at the end of the week.

The first class option of single occupancy does and should cost more. Offering ensuite could be tried in one cabin, but I would have thought the necessary extra cost would not make it attractive.

#### 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: An empty train is not environmentally friendly. I have suggested above some ways to make empty trains a bit fuller.