

Robert Ballantine

## Consultation Questions

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### 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: Logistically a dual focus franchise seems most appropriate and should encourage increased usage.

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

Q2 comments: A ten year contract with a 5-year review would encourage investment, innovative practices and should be less of a burden to the taxpayer.

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: Third parties could be invited to run pilot services on selected routes, particularly those requiring subsidy. This might bring about savings and improve service. They should be offered utmost flexibility to do so.

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: the possibility of termination of franchise at the five yearly review should concentrate the mind!

### Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Incentivising good performance is always more effective than penalising poor performance, as passengers probably end up paying for poor performance fines anyway!

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: Actual routes or service groups, given the diverse nature of the Scottish network.

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

Q11 comments: Incorporate passenger concerns expressed in surveys into the performance regime.

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: This should cover all aspects of service delivery, and should form part of the franchise brief.

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: This question indicates a very disturbing negative mindset, and should not even be contemplated. The role of Government is to strive for continuous improvement, not to allow standards to slip. Standing times should be reduced year on year, with the ultimate aim of none at all. The buses can do it, so why not the rail services?

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: No. Once again, this is a retrograde step, and is inconvenient to passengers. ScotRail has brought about major service improvements by reducing intermediate stops while keeping direct services. This should be continued.

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: Customer demand, but this should be assessed independently and passed to the franchisee for action.

18. What level of contract specification should we use 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: Yes

### **Scottish rail fares**

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

Q20 comments: Primarily to cover the costs of the service, in a way which encourages continued development of rail transport.

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:

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: There are limits to the number of people who can switch to off peak, because of work commitments. It is important to keep a reasonable differential but not to price people off the railways altogether.

### Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Accurate independent measurement of usage and accessibility of reasonable alternative facilities.

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: Fine, as long as passengers use it.

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:

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

Q27 comments:

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

Q28 comments:

### 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: It is imperative that cross-border services continue north of Edinburgh. Not only are they much more convenient for passengers travelling south of the border from e.g. Dundee and Aberdeen, they also provide a good quality service within Scotland beyond that of Scotrail. There would definitely be an increase in air travel if these non-stop services were terminated. The services also help inward tourism to areas north of Edinburgh. Both the Department of Transport and Scottish Ministers have a role in specifying services on these trains.

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: Absolutely not, for reasons stated above. There would be no benefits whatsoever for passengers travelling north of Edinburgh to be forced to change to a Scotrail train on arrival. The idea that this would create some sort of incentive for the Scotrail franchisee is outrageous, and discriminatory against a substantial number of Scottish passengers.

## **Rolling stock**

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

Q31 comments: Longer franchise terms might help. Can good quality used rolling stock be purchased from overseas?

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

Q32 comments: We should be looking to improve facilities whenever possible – again, passenger surveys will indicate what people want. Certainly good toilet provision on all trains and a catering trolley on any journey over 40 miles or so.

## **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: We can encourage increase wi-fi use. However mobile phones are a scourge, a form of noise pollution, and their use should be restricted – all trains should have at least one mobile free carriage.

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: We should allow this if franchisees find it viable.

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

Q35 comments: This is an important issue, which was trivialised in recent media coverage. The standard of behaviour of certain passengers is atrocious (e.g Glasgow to Aberdeen on a Friday afternoon) and this is undoubtedly fuelled by alcohol. I would have no problem supporting a ban on alcohol on all trains operating within Scotland for this reason.

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

Q36 comments:

## **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: Specify

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: Contract separately

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 services are important and convenient for those doing business in London. The help keep people out of aircraft and are therefore environmentally a good thing.

### **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: Encouraging people to use surface transport rather than air, and public transport rather than private cars for longer journeys. This therefore means that trains should be more comfortable, reasonably priced, punctual and have good links with each other, as well as with bus services.