

Derek Bibb

## 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:

The experience of East Coast franchise is interesting as it is in effect an *arms length* company owned by the UK Government. It has been successful at running a route where other operating companies have failed. Further the profits have gone back into Government coffers. There are practices of the East Coast operator especially in upgrading fares which are very unsatisfactory and from the users' point of view is probably a less friendly company than First Scotrail. Nevertheless it is an interesting model. It would be good not to lose the profits from the operation – this gives the possibility of them being ploughed back into the rail industry, This would be especially attractive where substantial slices of public money are going into subsidising routes

The idea of having some sort of mutual or community based operating company is interesting.

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:

See question 1

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

#### Q5 comments:

See question 1

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:

I believe that it is important to establish a viable measure of performance. While Public Performance Measure has, I think, been used universally by the rail industry it is doubtful whether it has any real meaning. According to the Rail Regulator PPM is the percentage of franchised passenger trains arriving at their destination, having made all booked calls, and within a specified lateness margin (typically five or ten minutes for some long-distance services). In theory at least it would be possible for a train to be late at a significant number of stations on the journey but still be regarded by PPM as having performed well by arriving at the final station on time or within the allowed margin. I do not know of any instances in Scotland but certainly elsewhere train companies have made very generous time allowances for the final leg of the journey (eg London trains into Liverpool Lime Street) thereby giving a false measure of their reliability. A 10 minute margin is quite significant if you are hoping to travel by a connecting service. The way in which Performance is measured needs review.

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

Q8 comments:

It is important in any programme of sanctions where public money has been paid for services which are in the event not delivered for any reason should be repaid or withheld in full as the case may be.

### **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:

It is fundamental that trains are reliable and run to time. It seems to me that this is important whatever the route, inter-city, suburban or rural

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:

I believe that great caution should be exercised here. The plain fact is that the operating companies have a better return if the trains having standing passengers. Further the passengers have in fact paid for a seat. This becomes especially important when considering people with a disability. People are good about giving up seats in this circumstance but nevertheless this cannot be relied upon

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: See Answer 29. Also better connections between trains and buses would enable people to make more use of public transport.

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:

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

Q18 comments:

One of the very worrying things is how the winter of 2010/2011 demonstrated that the Scottish railway system is not sufficiently prepared for the harsh weather conditions. Of especial concern is the fact that a significant proportion of the rolling stock was unable to cope with the weather conditions. It appeared that ice built up under the trains and that damage was caused when ice which had been built up under the train fell and bounced back causing damage to the train. A solution was found in creating skirts so that trains which were not in sheds could still be defrosted. Clearly those who dreamt up this strategy are to be congratulated. However all this had to be done in the *on the hoof* so to speak. Scotland does have harsh weather conditions and the problem with rolling stock had been completely unforeseen and what is more rolling stock which made up a significant part of the fleet had no proven capacity to operate under the harsh weather conditions. While it would be unreasonable to expect a near perfect service in harsh weather nevertheless the expectation should be built-in to any franchise that the operating company should have equipment including rolling stock which can cope with bad weather. This is especially important when the bad conditions last more than a few days.

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:

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:

It should be always born in mind that the fares in Britain are some of the most expensive in Europe. In Germany, where on the whole prices are higher, rail fares are much cheaper. It is certain that this situation is as a direct consequence of the way in the rail industry in Britain is structured. It should further be borne in mind that taking the cost of running a car to be somewhere in the region of 50p/mile (see AA's figures at [http://www.theaa.com/allaboutcars/advice/advice\\_rcosts\\_petrol\\_table.jsp](http://www.theaa.com/allaboutcars/advice/advice_rcosts_petrol_table.jsp)) then for a family of four a car very often works out cheaper than travelling by train.

If fares are raised to pay for improvements in the industry then this should be seen for what it is: an investment by the passenger and the passenger should

get a financial return on their investment just like other investor. One way in which this could be done would be when profits are distributed is for a proportion of the profits reflecting the investment made through higher fares to be returned to the passenger by reducing the fares.

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:

See 21

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:

Certainly it is wrong to create a principle, for example there should be no stations within less than a mile of each other, and then simply apply the principle *without regard to the circumstances (eg urban or rural lines)*. Beeching created a set of criteria which could be applied to discover whether a line was viable or not. Many lines which met his criteria but somehow missed his axe are now thriving or providing an important service. What is more services like those on the Argyle Line which did fall under the Beeching Axe have been brought back into use.

What rather needs to be done is to look at individual cases and ask the question does this line serve the local community.

In actual fact almost all the stations which are less than one mile apart are on the Queen Street to Anniesland via Maryhill line. Here I must declare an interest as we live at Gilshochill. On the face of it paragraphs 7.10 and 7.11 place a worrying question mark by the Scottish Governments commitment to this line.

The line serves a number of urban communities in North Glasgow; each station serving a distinct community. In addition Kelvindale serves Cleveden Secondary School, Summerston serves a significant shopping area and Gilshochill serves Glasgow Crematorium. Gilshochill station provides by far the easiest way to get to the Crematorium by public transport.

The close proximity of the stations on the Maryhill Line reflects the urban area through which the line passes. The distances between the stations are not dissimilar to lines in other urban areas. The Maryhill line very similar in character to the South London Line connecting Victoria and London Bridge via Denmark Hill (Time Table 178)

### **South London Line**

London Bridge	0
South Bermondsey	1¾
Queens Rd	2¾
Peckham Rye	3½
Clapham High St	6¼
Wandsworth Rd	6¾
Battersea Pk	7½
Victoria	8¾

Another route with stations much less than a mile apart is the section of the Tyne and Wear Metro from Central Station to South Gosforth. Below are the distances from Jesmond to South Gosforth

### **Tyne and Wear Metro**

Jesmond	0
West Jesmond	½
Ilford Road	1
South Gosforth	1½

*The distances above are taken from Bradshaw July 1939 – the old Jesmond station and the Jesmond Metro Stations are very near to each other. West Jesmond and South Gosforth are in the same location. Ilford Rd was a new station with the opening of the Metro and the distance is estimated*

According to figures in the *Evening Times* the number of people using the stations continues to grow. This would fit well with what I see as a regular user of the line. I believe that in part this due to the greater reliability of the service. Last winter the service became very unreliable and there was period of about month when very often there was no service at all. My perception is that this had a serious impact on the numbers using the line. It is very important that the service is both reliable and dependable.

While Summerston Station is about 2/5 of a mile from Gilshochill the railway takes the most direct route and not only is the distance greater on foot but also involves a walk up or down a steep hill. The line is very important to us as a family. My wife travels to work by it and my daughter uses the train to travel home from school and I make almost daily use of the line. If our local station, Gilshochill were to closed it would almost certainly mean more journeys by car. In the time it would take us to walk to Summerston we could be in town by car and there would be little to choose between the cost for the family to travel by bus and the cost of parking. (see note about bus fares below)

The communities served by the line are also served by various bus services. However the journey by bus is much longer and tedious and, what is more, in many cases more expensive. The saving in time is very marked in the journey to the city centre which is somewhere in the region of 10-12 minutes from most of the stations on the line as compared the journey by bus from Kelvindale is 28 minutes (Route 11), Summerston 25mins (Route 61) and Gilshochill 27 minutes (Route 54). (See note on cost below)

The line has recreational potential which has yet to be explored. Gilshochill, Maryhill and Kelvindale are in easy reach of the Forth Clyde Canal and can be used as the basis for walks.

It would be very interesting to know how the £208,000 station maintenance figure is arrived at. All we are offered is a global figure with no breakdown of costs. It is of course recognised and appreciated that the platforms are all well maintained, litter is removed, very importantly salt/grit is put down on the platforms and the access to platforms when there are icy conditions and there is an information point on each platform. However the intermediate stations are unstaffed and only Kelvindale has a monitor giving train information. This latter station incidentally has only one platform and so presumably would cost less to maintain.

The railway staff on the trains are almost always very helpful. However it is difficult to be confident that First are fully committed to the line. The timetable for the line is in a separate pamphlet rather being included in the North Clyde timetable booklet. There is also room for improvement of connections at Anniesland. For example the service from Queen St arrives at Anniesland so as to just miss a service to Partick and the Argyle Line. The result is a 50% increase in the time taken to travel to Hyndland. When there is bad weather the line loses its service completely.

A worrying feature of policy connected with railways is how decision making has been taken away from local communities. In England the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive is responsible for running the Tyne and Wear Metro and the Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive deals with the issuing franchises to operators of Mersey rail. This degree of local control does not seem to be possible in Scotland where there is a commitment by the government to devolution. The Greater Glasgow/Paisley area would correspond reasonably well with both the area covered by Tyne and Wear and Merseyside PTEs. The significance of this becomes very clear when the future of the Maryhill line is considered. The stopping service

was reinstituted in 1993 and was then extended to Anniesland as the result of a perceived local need by a body which had at least to some extent a local perspective; its future is being determined now by Scotland wide body having no such local credentials.

**Very important note re distances in the timetable**

It is important to note that the distances in the National Rail Timetable are clearly incorrect. Gilshochill and Possilpark/Parkhouse are shown as 1/4 mile apart when they are fact nearer 1.1 miles apart and Gilshochill and Summerston as 1 mile apart when the distance is about 0.4 miles.

**Note about fares**

Gilshochill – Queen St Return : Morning Peak £3:20 Off Peak £2:20

Bus £3:00 return

This means that the bus is cheaper in the Morning Peak but by only 20p for a considerably longer journey. At all other times of the day the train is cheaper. What is more more a family of four (two adults and two children) travelling by train to Queen St would pay off peak £4:40 (with the *Kids go free* tickets) as against £8 by bus.

**Note about the publicity given to the Consultation**

I do have a very real concern about the publicity about the Consultation Document which has been generally poor. More over so far as I am aware it has been not advertised at any of the intermediate stations on the Maryhill Line in spite of the implications the document has for these stations. What is more none of the stations whose future is in doubt are named in the Consultation Document and it was only as result of the vigilance of the *Evening Times* that the full implication for these stations became clear. I find this very disappointing as it was my understanding that with the setting up of the Scottish Parliament there was a commitment to a new standard of openness and transparency.

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:**

I believe that stations should be regarded as a community resource. Quite how this is to be achieved is hard to say. A greater involvement of local authorities in their running would be a good thing. However in the present financial situation it is unlikely that local authorities would want to undertake new commitments. One has only think of Perth Station - an interesting building of which much could be made, standing as it does looking forlorn and somehow down at heel.

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:**

I believe that the present system does not work well. But see answer to 25

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

**Q27 comments:**

A start would be to give them a greater say in the running of their stations.

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:**

My initial response is that whoever dreamt up the idea of all cross-border services terminating at Edinburgh Waverley clearly never travels by train and certainly never has the misfortune to have to change trains in Edinburgh. A station less suited to being an interchange is very hard to imagine. Try 2 adults with two children, a couple of suitcases and possibly a pushchair changing from say platform 13 to platform 11 or platform 17 to 19.. The platforms in question are nearly adjacent and on the level. However just in case such an interchange should be too easy First have erected fences between these platforms and handy barriers that force passengers from the Western End of the platform to have to come round crossing the roadway almost certainly encountering taxis and other traffic and on round through the concourse which always seems to be awash with people. Matters are not helped by the fact that with the present design of the station lots of people are effectively funnelled into an area where rail passengers and customers of Smiths and Boots have to compete for space.

I am interested to note from the figures in table 4 that more people change trains at Hyndland than at Waverley. Indeed there are more than half as many changes at Haymarket as at Waverley. In all probability a proportion of these were people travelling to Glasgow who choose to change at Haymarket because it is so much more straightforward. Our family will go to quite long lengths to try and avoid changing at Waverley including travel by car. We have family in Yorkshire and it is no accident that since there have been very few through trains from Glasgow to the East Coast Route we have almost always travelled by car.

Far from decreasing the trains from England to Northern destinations in Scotland there is room for considering again direct services originating from stations on the

West Coast Route. There would be scope to route through trains to Northern Scotland coming into Glasgow Central Station and then going north via the spur at Coatbridge. This might also have the effect of reliving pressure on Queen St.

In considering the questions as to whether the UK Government or the Scottish Government should have the final say it is clear that in what ever way such issues are resolved that the whole issue of Cross Border services also affect people living in England and indeed Wales. It is important that a not unduly parochial view of these matters is taken and indeed such a way of seeing things is not in the interest of the people of Scotland. Services in England especially the north have an impact on Scottish people particularly those living near the border. It is important that people living in Scotland have not only have a say in these services. but also in services such as those through the Channel tunnel. The present arrangements, while imperfect, do to permit this to happen.

A glaring omission from the report is any mention of cross border stopping services for example Edinburgh to Newcastle. This service in particular is patchy and irregular. This would seem like a route with considerable potential for commuter traffic to Edinburgh and Newcastle. The Scottish Government needs to have a view which looks beyond Scotland.

The reasons for this proposal seem to be to do with perceived administrative convenience and very little to do with passenger comfort or convenience.

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 Q29

## **Rolling stock**

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

Q31 comments:

The present system with the train leasing companies is very expensive and badly needs to be changed. What scope there is for the Scottish government to do this I am uncertain

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?

Q33 comments:

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:

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

Q35 comments:

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

Q36 comments:

It would be very helpful to have maps of the system at all stations. This is essential in the Glasgow/Paisley suburban system area where diagrammatic maps in the style of the London Underground Map should be on display at all stations. SPT had a very good map of this character which was on display at some stations but now seems to have vanished altogether. It would also be helpful if important stations like Partick and Hyndland had a sign indicating that all trains from platform 1 go to either Glasgow Central or Glasgow Queen St station. For many people travelling into Glasgow either station would do.

It is important to have sufficient detail in station announcements. At Milngavie all the stations at which the train is to stop are announced. Contrast this with Partick with trains going to a wide variety of places. Here only the destination is given. There is not even any indication of whether the train is travelling via Singer or Yoker, or in the case of fast trains the next station at which the train will stop.

One screen displaying multiple pieces of information, for example train departures, the next train and general information is acceptable at the less busy stations but at stations like Hyndland and Partick, which are very busy, is far from satisfactory.

### **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:**

I believe that Caledonian Sleeper is very important. The Caledonian Sleeper is the only way to reliably arrive in London early in the day. With cross channel services now coming into St Pancras the sleeper provides a convenient way to travel on to Europe. For example leaving Glasgow 23:40 on the sleeper it is possible to arrive at Köln 15:15 the next day. Far from seeing it as a short term project I believe that it needs to be developed.

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:**

In terms of the franchise for this route this might indeed be the sort of service which would lend itself to a not for profit TOC. (See 3.8 and 3.9)

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 astonishing thing is that the Scottish Government are not looking beyond the current sleeper services. When the channel tunnel was first planned it was British Rail's intention to run through sleeper services from places well north of London. Maybe this is a idea which should be revisited by the Scottish Government in collaboration with cities in Northern England especially Newcastle. Soon Die Bahn,

Germany's national railway, are planning through services to London from destinations in Europe beyond Paris and Brussels. Maybe a partner like Die Bahn could be found for such a project.

It is vital that the booking system for the Sleeper services are reviewed. Three years ago my wife accompanied a friend with a disability to Köln. Because she needed to take her wheel chair with her it was decided that it would be easier to undertake the journey by train. There are only a few of the compartments which are suitable for wheel chairs (which should also be reviewed). They therefore wanted to make the booking as early as they could. There was no problem with the journey from London to Köln including appropriate accommodation for the wheel chair. However it was not possible to get the sleeper booking confirmed and the situation was only resolved after writing to our MSP.

### **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: