

Respondent Information Form and Questions

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

Campaign to Open Blackford Railway-station Again

Title Mr ☒ Ms ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ **Please tick as appropriate**

Surname

Gaunt

Forename

Neil

2. Postal Address

Laurelbank

Moray Street

Blackford

Postcode PH4 1QP

Phone 01764 682 325

info@corbra-blackford.org.uk

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

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address ☐

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address ☐

- (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?

Please tick as appropriate ☒ Yes ☐ No

- (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?

Please tick as appropriate

☒ Yes

☐ No

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:

It is very important that the franchise provides for a universal rail service in Scotland where the balance is struck between economic, social and environmental considerations. The widely varying geography of Scotland presents particular challenges and the social element should be a strong consideration to ensure that rural communities are treated inclusively and are not disadvantaged by the potential “uneconomic” value placed on rail access in these locations.

We would like to see more rural stations opened/reopened as this will strongly aid community development in these areas and directly contribute to increased social inclusion.

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

Q2 comments:

At least 10 years which would give enough time for a more strategic review of station locations and a return on investments associated with opening new or re-opening old stations.

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

Q3 comments: No response

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

Q4 comments: No response

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

Q5 comments: No response

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

Q6 comments: No response

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

Q7 comments: No response

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

Q8 comments: No response

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: It is important that a balance is struck between incentives and penalties as both approaches will be necessary in the performance regime. .

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: Overall it is important that there is a universal performance regime for the whole of Scotland to ensure equity and consistency in the access to and delivery of services. However, there may be scope to differentiate some performance measures or targets to reflect the differing requirements between urban and rural settings.

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

Q11 comments: Firstly, it is important that passengers and other rail stakeholders have a genuine opportunity to contribute to the performance regime via surveys, consumer groups and other stakeholder engagement activities. The results of these activities must then be seen to have an influence on the performance regime. As an example, we are aware of a recent rail user survey that highlighted that faster journey times were a low priority compared to improving reliability and punctuality. Yet, the policy position still used by Transport Scotland and Network Rail when assessing the potential for new stations was that faster journey times was the utmost priority. Passenger issues and views must have a genuine influence on policy and performance.

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

Q12 comments: As mentioned above, we believe that while journey times are important, they should not unduly influence performance measures and targets, with the focus more on reliability and punctuality. If journey times remain an overriding priority this is a strong disincentive to opening new or re-opening old stations.

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: No response

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

Q14 comments: No response

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: The emphasis should be on minimising standing time by ensuring there is adequate rolling stock in place.

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: Re-opening stations or establishing new stations in more optimal locations will increase the potential for intermodal transport solutions. The potential for rail-rail and rail-other mode interchanges should be an increased consideration in the appraisal guidance for station investment.

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: A balance has to be struck between the provision of a “universal” service on the one hand (where Government should have an influence on the baseline performance regime to be adopted) and the franchisee being able to influence service provision in response to customer

needs.

It is vital that we avoid the situation whereby a franchisee could cherry pick elements of service provision on the basis of economic value alone – the balance between economic, social and environmental issues needs to be struck, with government ensuring that there is adequate regulatory control in place...

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

Q18 comments: No response

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

Q19 comments: No response

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: To be fair and equitable, eliminating anomalies, offering a transparent structure which does not disadvantage rural communities.

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: As in response to Q20, all fares should be equitable and not disadvantage rural areas.

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: No increase to be levied to recently enhanced areas – fares should be equitable.

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: We appreciate the necessity to utilise stock by encouraging passengers to travel at different times. Incentives should be used such as smart ticketing and discounts as well as ensuring that services fully support

the needs of users e.g. free WIFI so that off peak commuters can do productive work on the move whilst avoiding travel at peak times.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: It is important that we move away from the existing policy position that prioritises investing in existing stations over building new stations or re-opening stations. The original rail network and station locations were mainly established in the 19th century and since then we have seen major developments in population and transport infrastructures that should influence station locations of the 21st century.

Station locations should be determined by considering the key political, social, environmental, economic and legal aspects when assessing the cost/benefits involved.

The business case should not simply be a hard financial assessment but must include consideration of criteria such as predicted demographic change, customer demand, social inclusion, accessibility and multi-modal potential. Particular consideration should be given as to how to weight the criteria used so that rural stations are not disadvantaged given their comparatively lower footfall. For rural locations the provision of a train service can fulfil a vital role in the community, promoting social inclusion and directly aid community regeneration and sustainable economic growth. Unlike urban areas, train stations in rural locations may be the only or predominant choice for public transport.

When assessing station costs it is also important that “fit for purpose” designs are considered – low cost, modular build stations with minimal facilities and a low maintenance overhead are very often all that is required in rural and semi-urban areas – the cost/benefit ratios sought in the appraisal criteria should be influenced accordingly.

As an example, a recent independent assessment of the business case to re-open Blackford Station confirmed that it scored very highly on all criteria compared to the nearby “legacy” station at Gleneagles which is disconnected from the communities it is now intended to serve. Whilst not aiming to close Gleneagles station, the study concluded that “across the majority of established appraisal criteria, the option to re-open Blackford rail station outperforms other alternative options”.

The Blackford campaign has garnered widespread community, business and political support and the low cost design sought would make it a very affordable option that has great potential to increase journeys by rail and reduce journeys by road. Despite the many direct representations made, we still face a situation where the baseline premise is that strong preference will be given to investing in the nearby Gleneagles station. In these stringent economic times, we would strongly advocate that a truly objective assessment of station locations underpins any station investment decision and is not prejudiced by virtue of another station within the vicinity.

A more innovative approach to developing models for station locations should be progressed using modern techniques of spatial analysis and location modelling taking cognisance of the key criteria and how these criteria should

be weighted to ensure a level playing field between urban and rural locations.

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: We would strongly support the principle of opening up the opportunities for third parties to propose, promote and fund a station.

There are numerous alternatives to explore that could yield improvements to the network and access to rail without a significant capital cost to Scottish Government. Local businesses, especially in rural areas, may be willing to contribute towards funding - providing a direct economic benefit to commercial activity in the area whilst also directly benefitting the community itself.

Similarly, local community and social enterprises could contribute to sourcing funds for the initial development work and linking station build into wider aspects of community regeneration or sustainable growth. Commercial sponsorship of stations may yield funding potential, especially in rural areas.

Consideration could also be given to sourcing developer contributions towards station funding when local housing and related infrastructure developments are being considered as part of the local development planning process.

Equally, the potential for Government loans to third parties towards station funding would also be worthy of exploration, providing a longer repayment term whilst accelerating early investment and build to take place.

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: If wider options to fund and maintain stations by third parties are progressed then the responsibilities for management, maintenance and associated financial considerations will need to be reviewed more fundamentally than the existing split between Scottish Government and the primary franchisee. Irrespective of how the overall management and maintenance responsibilities are allocated there should be a consistent set of performance and service levels established.

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

Q27 comments: As outlined in Q25, local community involvement, particularly in rural and semi-urban locations, should be proactively encouraged.

Communities have a great deal to offer in terms of capacity building that, at one level, can contribute to proposing, promoting and funding of stations. At another level communities can become directly involved with station maintenance and upkeep or, progress opportunities for small business development aligned to stations e.g. cafes, cycle hire etc.

Overall, communities, especially in rural areas, take a great pride in their local area and this would be reflected in their support for local stations if the opportunities were available.

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

Q28 comments: Designating station categories and aligning the facilities available could be beneficial, especially if these were linked into the guidance for appraisal and investment in stations.

Careful consideration needs to be given as to how rural stations like Blackford, would be classified – these are local destination stations for inbound and outbound commuters as well as tourism stops with a modest overall footfall. As mentioned earlier, a “one size fits all” approach to station location planning should be replaced with a broader suite of criteria and weightings that take account of the differing context and facility requirements.

All stations should have a minimum level of facilities including basic shelter, disabled access, real-time train information, location map and access to integrated transport information as well as basic lighting and security.

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: Yes as this allows passengers to have a through journey without inter-dependant timetables. This would increase dispersed employment.

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: It would needlessly complicate train transfers and timetables. The current arrangement creates difficulties and challenges for less able passengers having to negotiate between East Coast and ScotRail via barriers and bridges. Time constraints may also add to these difficulties.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Less contorted means of procurement.

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

Q32 comments: Clean, working toilets; Adequate luggage space; Heating and ventilation; Refreshments on longer journeys; Easy boarding access, Announcements to be clear and accurate.

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: This should be prioritised, especially if off-peak travel is to be promoted as this would enable such passengers to work on the train.

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: Ensure First Class fares are attractive. Existing passenger travel data to be used.

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

Q35 comments: a Risk Assessment should be carried out.

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

Q36 comments: By using accurate real-time information at every station, especially when there are delays.

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: Yes, every attempt should be made to retain such services as an alternative to flying.

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: No response

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: No response

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: Sustainability; Social inclusion; Modal shift from private to public transport; Equitable fare structures; Integrated transport; Providing transport to employment and listening to public demand.