

Respondent Information Form and Questions

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

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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: To try to make a distinction between the 'economic' and the 'social' railway is to insert an artificial split at some fixed point between the two extremes. But just because some roads carry far less traffic than others, do we therefore make a distinction between 'economic' and 'social' funding for road maintenance? The reality is that there is a constantly shifting transitional area between the two extremes, and trying to pin down a clean break between them can prove difficult or even impossible.

Nevertheless, if government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, below, it would be possible to identify which specific services needed to be singled out for financial support on social grounds. I have listed these at the end of that response. All other rail passenger services would, collectively, be operated commercially within the terms defined in my response to that question, and could therefore be described as constituting the 'economic' railway.

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

Q2 comments: The main contract should be for as long as is compatible with achieving the purpose for which the franchise is let. In my view, the best type of franchise would be a 10-year rolling contract which would be perpetually renewable unless the franchisee failed to deliver a satisfactory service.

Longer franchises (15 years or more) offer train operating companies more incentive to invest in their own services - the prime example of this is Chiltern, with their investment programme successfully rescuing a service which had become run down through cost-cutting measures imposed on their predecessors. This would also give a strong reassurance of continuity for passengers - the bewildering succession of franchisees on some routes (East Coast, for example) has engendered little confidence among passengers in the competence of government to manage rail operating franchises.

There are also some arguments on the side of shorter franchises: one being that a shorter franchise term offers the opportunity to revise and if necessary reform the franchise conditions when it is re-tendered. This is the case with the 2014 Scotland franchise, the terms of which now can be improved.

For comments on the rolling stock leasing element of the franchise, see my reply to Q.31, below; and for separate comments on the timing of the Sleeper and long distance service contracts see my response to Question 38, below.

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

Q3 comments: The best way to achieve a fair and effective risk support mechanism for this franchise would be to align government financial support for rail services in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, below. This would give a strong incentive to the operator to manage revenue risk. There would, however, need to be a financial safety net to prevent services ceasing to operate altogether in the event of a major financial downturn seriously affecting the general level of fares revenue on the network as a whole.

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

Q4 comments: If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, below, then no profit share mechanism would be required within the train operating franchise as there would be no risk of excess profits being generated directly from public funds.

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

Q5 comments: The involvement of third parties is only ever likely to be a very minor element in the *operation* of rail services in Scotland. Provision should be made in the franchise to make this type of involvement possible, but there is a danger of the whole question becoming a distraction and drawing too much time and attention away from the main issues of how best to design and manage the main rail operating franchise itself.

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

Q6 comments: My response to this Question consists of a proposal to radically change the way in which the operating franchise is funded, based on the figures given in the diagram on page 12 of the consultation document (references made to the figures on that page are shown in *italics* below).

It must be stressed that this proposal would not affect the total amount of government funding for the railway, which would stay the same as now. There would, however, be a substantial change in the way in which the funding was allocated, resulting in very much greater clarity of purpose than exists at present.

The main points of the proposal are as follows:

- ▲ The train operator(s) would be expected to cover all the immediate costs of train movement (provision of train crews, traction fuel, and day-to-day train maintenance) direct from fares revenue, with a small number of exceptions as detailed below**, throughout Scotland. This would mean that the entire rail network would be operating on a commercial basis, with the financial rewards for efficient operation being directly earned from fares revenue. *This would be an entirely practical aim, as total revenue from fares is currently £259m p.a., while*

train movement costs, as defined above, are currently somewhere around £260m p.a.

- ⤴ In order to make this possible, the government would undertake to wholly fund the provision of rail infrastructure (track, structures, signalling, and all costs - including staffing and maintenance costs - related to stations) throughout Scotland, as well as the leasing costs of the rolling stock required to operate the services. *Of the £290m subsidy paid to the train operating company at present, almost nothing currently goes towards the direct running costs of the trains - £165m goes straight out again to Network Rail in track access charges, £86m goes direct to the ROSCOs to lease rolling stock, and running costs of stations account for the rest. My suggestion is that these sums of public money should instead go direct to Network Rail and the ROSCOs, and not to or via the train operator(s) at all.*

This would be of great benefit to everyone, without costing any more than now in public subsidy. Note particularly that this is already the *de facto* way in which funds are currently spent, although the responsibilities which should go with the funding are not at present as clear as they should be.

The main benefits of this proposal would be:

- ⤴ Revenue from fares could be directly related to operating costs, so that business decisions could be made promptly and effectively by the train operator(s).
- ⤴ None of the profits made from train operation would come direct from public funds; instead profitability would depend on the franchisee's success in attracting and retaining custom in a competitive market.
- ⤴ The method of funding would put passenger train operation on a much more directly competitive basis with commercial bus services.
- ⤴ Public financial support would be directed unambiguously towards public uses - primarily, the rail infrastructure (railway routes, stations and signalling), and the rolling stock fleet.
- ⤴ Rolling stock leasing costs could be decoupled completely from the operating franchise(s). This has already been done to a limited extent: the proposal offers the opportunity for the entire rolling stock fleet to be specified, branded and procured to match the government's long-term aims - the programme of electrification, for example - without being related to the timescales of the train operating franchise(s). It offers the possibility that much more favourable terms can be negotiated with the ROSCOs if the effective ownership of the fleet remains a separate long-term public responsibility.
- ⤴ Similarly, the unambiguous public responsibility for the network infrastructure and stations would enable much clearer funding and investment decisions to be made for the public benefit. The entire rail network would be able to be treated as a national asset, maintained at public expense, and treated largely on an equal basis compared with the road network and other public infrastructure.

**** NOTE ON THE SOCIAL RAILWAY (see reference ** above)**

****** The intention of this proposal is that no public funding would be available to the operating company to cover the direct operating costs (as defined above) of any rail services except:

1. The Far North group of services (Kyle, Wick/Thurso)
2. The West Highland group of services (Mallaig, Fort William, Oban)
3. South of Ayr (Girvan, Stranraer)
4. Any stops at intermediate stations and any individual journeys on any other routes which are specified by the government and Transport Scotland from time to time, and agreed with the operator(s).

All the above would be funded on an agreed strictly 'net direct operating cost' basis.

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

Q7 comments: The performance bond should be enough to cover the costs of re-letting the contract if, for any reason, the current one ceases before its due term. The main aim of such a bond should be to ensure continuity of supply of passenger rail services in Scotland, and it should not be looked on as a financial guarantee of good behaviour - other mechanisms should be employed for this purpose, to avoid costly legal disputes which would be unlikely to be of any benefit to passengers.

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

Q8 comments: If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, above, this would be a relatively simple matter in relation to the operation of train services, as failure to fulfil the franchise commitments would immediately jeopardise fares revenue and therefore profitability for the operator.

In relation to other commitments, most notably the provision and management of the rolling stock and stations, there would need to be direct control of standards by some means similar to the SQUIRE regime, as the government would, in effect, have assumed full responsibility for these elements of the national passenger rail network.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, above, there would be little need for government involvement in incentivising or penalising the *operation* of train services by the franchisee, as the incentives and penalties would be built in to

the revenue stream, especially if an enhanced version of the present 'delay repay' compensation regime was required so that revenue and profitability would be directly related to the degree of punctuality and reliability actually achieved by the operator(s).

It should be noted, however, that some kind of 'shadow revenue penalty' would be required for those services which are supported by public funding (see Note ** at the end of the response to Question 6), in recognition of the fact that only a very limited amount of revenue would be at risk if they failed to be operated properly.

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: Given my response to Question 9, above, it would be appropriate to apply a performance regime for the operation of train services which was aligned only with the group of services receiving direct public financial support, as little else would be required.

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

Q11 comments: This question is difficult to answer objectively. Clearly, passenger interests are important, but there is a risk that a mountain of petty regulation could get in the way of the main business of running the railway as efficiently as possible, and might well prove to be counter-productive.

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

Q12 comments: This question really reflects all the complex issues surrounding the establishment of the actual timetables to be operated by the franchisee throughout Scotland. For the timetables to be operated in 2014 when the new franchise starts, planning needs to start now, so this means that the actual operator of the services will not be able to be involved in planning them. The main question is how far the services should differ from the timetables currently being operated throughout the network.

It is unlikely that there will be much leeway on the total train mileage to be run on the whole network, with the exception of the cross-border services (see my response to Question 29, below, for this aspect). There is also unlikely to be much in the way of journey time savings through higher line speeds, though some single-track routes could be candidates for improvement programmes. Time savings on longer-distance journeys can be made by removing intermediate stops, but this then worsens journey opportunities for passengers wishing to use these stations.

There does need to be a constructive dialogue between the Government, the operators and Network Rail to examine opportunities for line speed improvements and adjustments, as well as additional passing loops on single line sections; but the only really significant time saving on a trunk route would be for Edinburgh-Aberdeen trains in Fife, involving long term capital

expenditure to eliminate severe speed restrictions at Burntisland, Kinghorn and Aberdour, and there is no realistic prospect of this being undertaken within presently envisaged time scales.

In the trade-off between scheduled journey speeds and punctuality of operation, there clearly needs to be some leeway in the schedules to recover occasional loss of time without disrupting other services and connections, but at the same time without slowing the timings down to an unattractive extent. Professional timetable compilers have sufficient experience to make the right allowances for this aspect in the service schedules, and it is unlikely that uninformed external advice is needed by them when compiling the timetables.

On the question of general service levels, there are some outstanding issues which do need to be addressed. One is what level of Sunday services should be operated - in general, the frequency of Sunday services is unsatisfactory and should be reviewed, especially on the Glasgow/Edinburgh - Aberdeen group of services. The current two-hourly unevenly spaced Sunday schedules are simply inadequate for the volume of demand on this route.

Another question is whether some services which operate at approximately even intervals should be adjusted to exactly clockface times (for example, departures which are currently at 0915, 1013, 1116, 1221, 1311, 1412 and 1517 could all be adjusted to leave regularly at 16 minutes past each hour) - this helps passengers by enabling timetables to be easily memorised and connections to be regularly made, but has the disadvantage that the journeys generally need to be adjusted to the lowest common denominator so that they can often fall short of their full speed potential and this can lead to wasteful scheduling. It is only practicable where the intermediate station stopping pattern is the same or at least very similar for every train, something which currently does not apply on any trunk route in Scotland.

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: If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, above, a SQUIRE type regime would be required to monitor all aspects of standards at stations, as there would otherwise be no direct incentives towards achieving the standards set.

Only a very limited version of the present SQUIRE regime, if any, would be required to monitor train service delivery, as this would be determined by commercial considerations as noted above.

For comments on the standards to be applied to stations, see my response to Question 26, below.

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

Q14 comments: I consider that a modified SQUIRE regime would be sufficient for the purpose, as described above.

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: Attempting to enforce standing time or overcrowding limits on individual train journeys is a futile bureaucratic exercise which is bound to fail. There will always be times when trains are busy or crowded. What is the alternative? Leaving people behind at the station, like buses do at bus stops when they are full?

There are only two types of overcrowding which are unacceptable and need addressing: the first is where it regularly occurs on long-distance journeys so that passengers travelling for more than 20-30 minutes have to stand; and the second is where it is so acute that it delays trains significantly, or even causes danger to individual passengers, thereby extending journey times and in the end reducing the carrying capacity of the route, so making the problem even worse.

It is not always peak hour commuter journeys which suffer from overcrowding - sports matches and other special events can cause peak demands, and the much lower frequency of scheduled services on Sundays on routes such as Glasgow-Aberdeen can also sometimes result in a significant degree of overcrowding, especially where shorter trains need to be used unexpectedly.

There are very few places in Scotland where overcrowding is such a serious issue that heavy capital expenditure is required to cure the problem (as it is in some other parts of Britain), and because of this it ought to be a relatively straightforward matter to deal with. If the suggestion I make in response to Question 21 below is taken up, there will also be a considerable opportunity for the train operator to encourage off-peak travel through their ticket pricing policies. It is not in the interests of the operator to allow serious overcrowding to persist as it makes ticket issuing and checking on trains very difficult, thereby leading to sizeable potential revenue loss.

One particular problem is that most rolling stock is of a 'one size fits all' design, and has quite inadequate luggage capacity for long-distance passengers; frequently, there are plenty more seats than passengers on such routes but many of the seats are occupied by luggage which has nowhere else to go, so that many passengers prefer to stand rather than confront people whose suitcases are occupying seats. Making more luggage space available, though, does not solve this problem as it permanently costs seating capacity so that a more radical rethink of this question is needed from the rolling stock owners - see my response to Question 31.

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: Absolutely not. The need to interchange is a serious bar to the attractiveness of passenger services for a great many people, and the proposal as outlined would be purely for the convenience of the operators and not that of passengers. Rail privatisation has reduced the confidence passengers have in connections, and the inadequacies of the present ticketing systems mean that many journeys are made using several end-on tickets which give no redress to passengers when connections fail.

If interchange could be fully designed into the road and rail passenger service **networks** in the same way as it is in Switzerland, this would be a different matter, but with deregulated bus services and without a 'controlling mind' in charge of the network of public transport as a whole, this is currently impossible in this country, and cannot be considered as a realistic option.

Where this question concerns the operation of long-distance cross-border services, my response to Questions 29 & 30 should be referred to.

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: Please see my response to Question 12 for the answers to this question. It is important to note that process of compiling the actual timetables to be operated in 2014 should be well under way by now in 2012, so that there will be little opportunity for the operator(s) of the 2014 franchise to influence the timetables they will be operating. There is therefore a considerable burden of responsibility on Government and Transport Scotland to get the answers to this question right at the earliest possible opportunity.

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

Q18 comments: See the response to Question 17 above. There should be a constructive dialogue with a joint working party to review timetables on all routes well before the franchise is transferred in 2014.

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

Q19 comments: If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, above, then there will be a strong incentive for the fullest extent of commercial innovation to be pursued by the franchisee, in the knowledge that they would retain all the rewards for the successful development of new markets.

At the same time, they would be required to bear the commercial risks involved, although the financing method would mean that these would be contained to acceptable levels, and there would also need to be an overall financial safety net as described in my response to Question 3, above.

There would also be opportunities for constructive dialogue with Government

to introduce supported journeys and station stops at commercial rates.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments:

The *rationale* for a fares *policy* (as opposed to simply allowing the operators to charge whatever they wish for their services) should be: to keep fares at such a level that they are seen by the users, and potential users, of the rail network as being charged on a basis that is fair to everyone, including the train operators.

If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, above, then the *purpose* of the fares policy will be to allow enough revenue to be raised from fares as will cover the immediate operating costs of trains across the network as a whole on a commercial basis.

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 is quite clear that the present regulation of fares by government utterly fails to be seen as fair by the users, and potential users, of the services. This is because, in its present form, it has aspects which are clearly indefensible and were only perpetuated because it proved difficult to renegotiate individual franchises to take account of changes which would have improved the basis for regulation. The 2014 franchise offers the opportunity to make drastic improvements to the regulation of fares in Scotland, and at the same time to offer train operator(s) the chance to be imaginative and innovative in encouraging travel at times and in places which will see the best commercial returns throughout the network.

The main respect in which the present regulation of fares is unfair is that it only applies to RETURN tickets. This has led to the widespread practice by train operators of charging almost the same fares for (unregulated) single journeys as for the equivalent (regulated) returns - so that a single journey of 100 miles often costs passengers twice as much as 100 miles of travel using a 50 mile out-and-back return ticket. It is arguable that not only does this make single fares far too expensive, but it can quite often mean that the regulated return fares are too cheap, especially for travel at peak times. The way regulation has been applied distorts the market drastically to no good purpose.

In my view, there is one simple way to resolve the problem of what are the appropriate fares to charge - that is by requiring an anytime mileage-based single fare to be available between all feasible pairs of stations throughout the network, rounded up to the nearest 50p for fares up to £10, the nearest £1 up to £20, and the nearest £5 thereafter. The current fair fare rate would be somewhere around 18-20p per mile, but this would need to be subject to

annual negotiation and agreement between the government and the operator.

Once such a fair fare is set, the operator should have complete commercial freedom to offer any discounts below this maximum that they wish to, anywhere on the network - for example, off-peak returns (to encourage off-peak travel), day returns, multi-journey tickets, advance booking, railcard discounts and so forth; season tickets between two stations would very probably be charged as a fixed multiple of the ordinary single fare.

The only exception to the price cap would be for first-class fares, which would be a purely commercial matter for the operator, though there may need to be some kind of limit applied (e.g. first class fares could be a maximum of twice the standard single fare). There would be no requirement for the same discounts to apply to first-class as to standard class fares.

If this approach to setting fares were to be adopted, there would be no justification for funding separate geographic price controls, for example in the Strathclyde area, from national resources, although opportunities would remain for local authorities or other public bodies to continue to negotiate special discounts on local fares within their areas through payments to the train operator(s) at a commercial rate, which would then be based on the charging principle that the train operators would be no better and no worse off than they would be without such arrangements.

The great advantage of applying price controls in this way is that it would allow maximum commercial freedom to the operator, whilst being seen by the passengers, and potential passengers, as a fair basis on which to charge fares. It would mean many single fares going down quite substantially, but quite a number of return fares, especially at peak times, would rise compared with the present levels.

It is possible that fares on cross-border services would continue to be controlled in the present way for a time so that there might be some initial discrepancies. But there is such a maze of wild discrepancies in the present fares and ticketing system that almost any reform based on a fair and universal system would be an improvement on what is there now, and this franchise change offers an immense opportunity to put right one of the least satisfactory aspects of rail privatisation.

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: If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, above, then the balance between the amounts of taxpayer subsidy and passenger revenue will remain unchanged, but with very much better accountability and clarity as to the purposes for which they are used.

If fares are set in the way suggested in my response to Question 21 above, then the only figure that will need to be set by Government in consultation with

the train operator(s) will be the basic pence per mile fares rate, which would be reviewed and set annually in line with inflation and other industry costs.

There is no possible justification for charging more to travel on sections of the network which have been improved - by the same token, should motorists be charged more to drive on new motorways? It is extraordinary that such a suggestion arises from the same source as oversaw the removal of tolls from the Forth, Tay, Erskine and Skye bridges - the same logic would require the tolls to be reinstated at these locations, and introduced elsewhere.

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 is no need for this level of detailed control to be incorporated into the contract, so long as there is a mileage-based regulated maximum single fare set for every journey, as suggested in my response to Question 21 above. Discounts for off-peak and return travel will undoubtedly be offered on a widespread basis by the operator on a commercial basis to encourage travel at times when there is surplus capacity, and it is equally likely that no discounts, other than on season tickets, will be available at peak times, thereby putting some return fares up compared to present levels. This is straightforward and does not require detailed manipulation of fares systems by government.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, above, Government will have a clear public responsibility for all matters relating to stations throughout Scotland. This would include responsibility for proposals to close those stations for which there is little or no current financial or social justification, and also funding new stations in locations where they are needed. The process for doing both these things needs to be streamlined, so that the point at which a decision is taken is reached reasonably quickly, whilst taking account of public opinion.

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: See my response to Question 5 for an answer to this question.

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 government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, above, it would certainly be much better that a single, identifiable government funded organisation should be responsible for the management, staffing and maintenance of all stations throughout Scotland.

This would offer an opportunity for the expertise in station management, maintenance and development throughout the country to be located within a single organisation, with resultant efficiency improvements. It would also mean that the operation of services would be quite separate from the provision of stations, which could then be permanently branded independently from the operator(s) of the train services.

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

Q27 comments: This is something that Scotrail has pursued with great success over recent years - a small budget can be deployed in a very effective and imaginative way. Again, this could benefit from direct government involvement, as the encouragement of local voluntary and community groups is a well established practice in Scotland.

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

Q28 comments: The Government funded Stations Company (see Question 26 above) should be charged with setting all these standards on the basis that they must be developed with the interests of the passengers to the fore.

Certain important standards would need to be set, including what opening hours should be mandatory for ticket offices, what standards should apply to heating and lighting of waiting accommodation - heated waiting rooms ought to be open throughout the period of train operation at interchange stations, for example - and all the existing work to improve access to stations should be consolidated under this body.

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: The current arrangements for cross-border franchises work reasonably well, apart from the absence (since December 2007) of any through trains between north-east Scotland and north-west England, and the unnecessary duplication of East Coast and Cross-Country services on more than 300 miles of the East Coast main line between Aberdeen and York.

However, if, as seems probable, it is proposed by the DfT to cut back the English franchises to Edinburgh and Glasgow when they are renewed in the near future, the question of through services further north will necessarily arise quite soon, and it would be advisable to prepare a response now to any consultation that may be entered into by the DfT on this matter.

In this case, there will be three main questions to be considered.

- ⤴ How important are the through services to passengers? - the answer is that they are very, very important to a significant proportion of long-distance passengers.
- ⤴ What cross-border destinations should be served by through trains? Coupled with this is the question of where in Scotland should be linked by long distance services to those cross-border destinations.
- ⤴ What standards should be applied for interchange for long-distance passengers? This question is important because no cross-border services can ever provide through journeys to all the destinations which passengers require.

The second of these questions is addressed in my response to Question 38, below, which proposes that cross-border services and the Caledonian Sleepers should be combined into a single proposal for operating a group of long-distance through services from Scotland.

The third of these questions is addressed in my response to Question 28, above.

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: NO. Please see my responses to Questions 29 & 38 which address this question in some detail.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, above, this would enable the rolling stock fleet to be leased on advantageous terms which would be quite separate from the operating franchise(s), and would enable all rolling stock to be branded and specified according to Government requirements.

It would also enable a new fleet of long-distance stock to be supplied for the group of services (including the successors to the sleeper trains) which are described in my response to Questions 37 & 38, above.

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

Q32 comments: I have mentioned some questions and issues about facilities on trains in other replies - luggage space, wi-fi connectivity, first-class seating, electronic information displays. The need for recognisably more comfortable stock for longer-distance services exists, bearing in mind the long journey times on some routes - it takes as long to travel from Inverness to Wick, for example, as from Edinburgh to London, and yet it is unthinkable that the latter journey would have anything like the spartan accommodation of the former.

Toilets are always a contentious issue, but the balance of supply seems to be about right now. Current refreshment provision is basic but reasonably adequate. However, again catering will be a major question if/when the new trains for the long-distance Scottish services described in my response to Questions 37&38, below, are introduced.

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: The technical feasibility of installing Wi-Fi is well established, and it has been available on East Coast trains in Scotland for many years. If government financial support for rail services is aligned in the way suggested in my reply to Question 6, responsibility for funding rolling stock would rest wholly with the Government, so that investment to achieve full Wi-Fi and high bandwidth mobile phone connectivity would be limited only by the willingness to pay for it from public funds.

A small but significant point is that this should be coupled with installation of 240v charging points at all seats in any trains that are so equipped.

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: Opening up first class accommodation on most trains (e.g. the 170s) to standard class ticketholders would make hardly any difference to the realistic capacity of the trains, and would risk losing a good source of revenue for the operators without any compensatory financial gain. In my view, there would be little point in doing this - and the existence of first-class accommodation is a valuable way of promoting rail as a civilised way to travel.

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

Q35 comments: Alcohol is not, of itself, a problem on trains; but the bad behaviour associated with its excessive consumption can be. There are several problems about banning it. One is enforcement, as the sort of people who currently cause a problem are not likely to observe such a ban, whereas those who enjoy a quiet drink on a train (particularly if they have chosen to travel by train because they do not wish to drink and drive) would be seriously inconvenienced by it.

A blanket ban on alcohol would probably not achieve its objectives, and would deter a considerable number of people from travelling by train by choice. However, further measures to curb anti-social behaviour would be welcome.

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

Q36 comments: The two main ways in which the provision of travel information could be further improved are, first, to ensure that existing systems - especially electronic ones - work reliably; and secondly, to make a particular effort to see how the systems are used at times of travel disruption, especially *from the point of view of the passenger*.

Although there has been a great improvement in travel information systems in general in recent years, there are still far too many failures in both the above respects on the rail network at present. In many cases, especially where on-train systems are concerned, it would be far better for them not to be there at all, than for often confusing and misleading (and sometimes downright wrong) information to be left on display. There really does need to be a concerted effort to remind staff that well-informed passengers are happier, even at times of major disruption, than ones that are left (sometimes literally) in the dark. Of course, it is also vitally important that the staff themselves are kept properly informed - this also is not always done at present.

It should be remembered that although there have been recent improvements in travel information generally, public expectations of such systems in all aspects of life are so much higher now, that shortcomings in the transport sphere which were little noticed before will now be very obvious indeed to a public which has much less patience with inadequacies than in former years.

The more traditional forms of passenger information such as leaflets and timetables are well handled in Scotland, though there is still some room for improvement. Any franchisee should be told that all publicity material which is produced should be comprehensive, regardless of who the operator is, and that this should extend to information about special services at holiday periods and rail replacement bus services in the case of service disruptions.

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: The Scottish sleepers are an anachronism, a survivor from an earlier age. Although a 'niche' market for the services still exists, this is not sufficient to justify the sleepers' continuing without change in the longer term. It is important that thought should be given now to the direction they should be taking in the future.

I suggest that the answer to this question should be combined with the answers to Questions 29 and 30 about the other Cross-border services, and that the opportunity should be taken to examine the future role of the sleepers at the same time as, and with a view to integration with, the rest of the cross-border services north of Glasgow and Edinburgh, when these come up for review by the DfT in the future.

Ideas from all quarters should be examined, and they should not be limited purely to the train company concerned (see my answer to Question 38, below), although decisions about the services to be operated should in the end be commercial ones, on the same 'operating cost only' basis as I have suggested for the main Scottish internal services - see the answer to Question 6, above.

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: Given my response to Question 37 above, it would clearly be right to establish a separate contract, with a different time frame from the franchise for the rest of the network, for the Scottish sleepers, with the aim of incorporating them into the development of **all** Scottish cross-border services, other than those terminating in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Overnight services to/from London, some with 'hotel train' facilities on the European model, would almost certainly still form part of the Scottish long-distance services group, but the principal function of operating these services as a single contract would be to provide much better value for public money spent on the supply of a group of innovative long-distance open-access through services (on the Grand Central or Hull Trains model), with appropriate new rolling stock, running from the five main northern cities - Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth, Stirling and their intermediate stations - to London and other principal British destinations.

The aim would be for these services to replace the northern sections of the existing DfT franchises, which could then be cut back to serve only Glasgow and Edinburgh, and also to replace the present sleeper services.

A group of services of this kind could offer an opportunity for a high profile, distinctively Scottish, presence on routes throughout Britain; for example, trains could go from the five northern cities via the **East Coast** route to Newcastle and York, and on to destinations such as Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham or London; and via the **West Coast** route through Motherwell and Lockerbie to Carlisle and Preston and onwards to destinations such as Manchester, Liverpool, Crewe, Chester, Birmingham, Bristol and perhaps even Cardiff. There might also be merit in considering a **cross-country** route from Glasgow via Kilmarnock, Dumfries and Carlisle to Leeds and Hull.

The time frame of this contract would depend on changes to the DfT's specifications for the present East Coast and Cross Country franchises, so that it would have to be developed in consultation with them. They and the ORR would also need to be closely involved with the open-access aspect of applications for the Scottish long-distance group of services, which would probably mean that financial support would only be allowed to be provided for the sections of route north of the border.

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: Please see my response to Question 38, above, for my views in reply to this question.

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:

Note: time series annual figures would be needed to make any performance indicators meaningful.

Some possible indicators would be:

- ▲ Quantity of traction fuel (diesel/electricity) consumed per passenger

mile delivered.

- ⤴ Proportion of rubbish collected on trains and stations which is sorted and recycled.
- ⤴ Amount of fossil fuel/renewable energy 'locked in' to infrastructure renewals.
- ⤴ Proportion of electricity consumed for traction and other purposes which is generated from renewable sources.
- ⤴ Proportion of total train mileage operated by electric trains.