

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

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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

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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: A single focus, single franchise. All routes in Scotland have, or should have, a local service. In the (more distant) past a dual focus has been used to reduce, or prevent development of, the local services which are often as important to Scotland as the “economic” routes. The exception was Strathclyde PTE, which is unlikely to return, but even here there were issues with cross-boundary services and a reluctance to serve even all Strathclyde. Car drivers could cross the boundary, train users were restricted. Unless there are really strong controls, not yet explained, it is to be expected that a dual focus, without cross-subsidy, would run down local train services. The trend elsewhere in the UK seems that dual focus has not been a success with Great Western amalgamating mainline and suburban services and strong suggestions of TransPennine and Northern franchises being re-merged.

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

Q2 comments: Short Franchise. As explained in the consultation, there can be no guarantee that a long franchise would encourage a franchisee to invest better. The only real advantage of a long franchise is putting off the expense of a franchise re-let and the undoubted upset for ordinary railway workers. A long franchise may well require a break-point. Elsewhere in the UK one long franchise has been very successful in bringing a whole railway back almost from the dead. Another long franchise cost the taxpayer billions for a railway which had previously been profitable. Most TOC's (but not all) have not excelled themselves but all have made some welcome improvements. Also, as pointed out in the consultation, these are not politically or economically stable times, and better to be ready for change after seven years.

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

Q3 comments: Risk to franchisees, effectively contractors, should be reduced as far as possible. Contractors charge for risk, they do not take on risk (c/f the Borders DFM single contract). “Scotland” knows what is needed from its railway and can pay for risk cheaper than contractors.

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

Q4 comments: Presumably this any profit being shared with Transport

Scotland? It is tempting to say that if the franchise is well specified and well supervised then profit should go to the operator as incentive and after winning a competitive bid. Politically a profit share may be inevitable but it will price up the bid.

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

Q5 comments: Third party operators are seen as extractive and damaging. However, they have introduced some new services that “could not be done”. Even worse, some of the franchise operators have bullied these third party operators out of business by putting on their own new service to compete. Outwith this consultation the West Coast Main Line could well do with more competition, especially between Manchester and London. Transport Scotland should look out for possibilities if the franchise winner is unhelpful. Clearly, the “Jacobite” operation is an economic win for Scotland.

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

Q6 comments: Present system appears to work (to us as passengers) but it is worrying that where service levels are not specified the present franchisee does not always act in the passengers’ best interests although in other cases it has gone beyond the specification.

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

Q7 comments: Performance bonds will price up bids, company guarantees do not appear to have been too helpful in the recent past. Insurance and pension liabilities will be required. However, the problem is understood, if one franchisee fails or pulls out then the next franchise bid will be more expensive. These bonds do seem to be set to the nearest very large round number, the setting of which is beyond us.

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

Q8 comments: While terminating the franchise is a possibility, graduated sanctions, as at present, appears (to us as passengers) to work well but must be complex and expensive to supervise.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: It is tempting to say penalise poor performance, good performance should result in profit.

A very important issue which does not derive directly from the ScotRail franchise is the service under extreme winter conditions. What happens is that when winter conditions become “extreme”, but not extreme enough to block the line then some lines are “locked out” to make it easier to keep a normal service on more favoured lines. This happens, for example, at Dunbar and Larkhall but of particular concern is the Lanark Line. The junctions get locked so it is easier to run the Virgin WCML service and ScotRail trains terminate at Motherwell with no service at all to Wishaw, Carluke and Lanark. Just when communities need trains most they are shut down. It really is not acceptable. People understand when the line is physically blocked but not, say, at Carluke when all other trains are seen running but not stopping and the local service is completely cancelled. It is an easy get-out for Network Rail to employ less qualified track workers and ScotRail are probably gleeful to drop off this service without penalty when conditions are difficult. An emergency timetable should not just be to make it easy for Anglo-Scottish trains. The emergency timetable should be a case of a thinned down timetable still serving the local stations or diverting these trains to Carstairs where they can be turned round and so that at least Shieldmuir and Carluke can still be served. This capability should be part of the Rail2014 network.

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: This is back to the dual focus question. Except it could be seen that the Highland Lines may have particular issues different from Central and South Scotland.

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

Q11 comments: The present regime seems to work well (for us as passengers) but there do seem to be some gaps and some counterproductive regime items.

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

Q12 comments: This refers to padding out recovery time?? The present system in Scotland appears to be working well, unlike some other franchises. Where there are (minor) performance problems it appears to be on certain routes, especially single line routes and approach to Waverley. The main issue now is the policy of reducing journey times by cutting out intermediate stops. Two tier services are needed so that all communities are served. The success of the Strathclyde system was not in cutting journey times but in providing a comprehensive service. It could well be that the importance of journey time is over-estimated except for certain routes where lack of

infrastructure does result in hopelessly uncompetitive journey times.

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: While there have been significant passenger complaints resulting from SQUIRE it is difficult to see how the service could be managed without it (seeing as Scottish taxpayers are contributing to the service). There is a feeling that some SQUIRE levels are too prescriptive resulting in a poorer service but in others the franchisee takes advantage of less than prescriptive levels. This suggests that the often hated SQUIRE is doing a good, probably essential, job.

Having said that it is worth noting some complaints with the SQUIRE regime or its implementation. It is often too prescriptive or imposed without consideration for passengers.

Departure times should not be as rigidly enforced. During busy times trains have to depart on time. For the last, late night train when the network is not as stressed some discretion should be given to guards/conductors/SMA Drivers to wait for a vulnerable passenger hurrying up the platform or possibly from a connecting train (at a “hub” perhaps?) without the risk of being disciplined by an overzealous supervisor. Sometimes SQUIRE can be counterproductive to passengers interests.

Similarly the “Ring of steel” is causing problems and extending journey times. Most users are not cheating and ticket barriers certainly do not stop all cheating. They may make it more inconvenient to cheat but a growing resentment is also setting in with passengers being less concerned if the system does not actually force them to pay. Good, on-train checking is important and on overcrowded trains can be impossible. In particular, honest, fare-paying passengers should not be held up, illegally detained, just because the ring of steel cannot cope with them. In such situations passengers should be allowed through. In many cases ticket barriers cannot handle valid tickets. Managers blame “damaged tickets”, ordinary station staff say differently “Oh, they tickets never work the barriers”. It is to be hoped all risk assessments are in place in case of emergency. It often takes some time to attract a member of staff and there is particular concern at one location where there are no staff present at the ticket barriers. The ring of steel has also increased walking distances at some stations and the ambience is much less welcoming than in Chris Green’s time.

Ticket Vending Machines (TVM’s) are a big advantage but passengers should be quite clear about whether their presence means getting on the train without a ticket is prohibited. If this were to be enforced then journey times would increase significantly. For example notices at Larkhall suggest tickets must be bought before boarding the train. This would be unworkable. Apart from the

problems incurred in handling cash there would be other effects. Catching the 07.07 at Larkhall on a dark winter morning there would be a queue as people fumbled the TVM. Passengers would have turned up, say, 15 minutes earlier, at least. The alternative is turning up 2 minutes before time and paying on the train in the warmth.

Another issue is that of retention of tickets. For many users tickets provide a detailed receipt. Some receipts do not provide the detail. Why should customers have to know to ask for a receipt? If tickets are to be confiscated then all tickets should be sold with a detailed receipt. It is no good staff starting angry arguments at the end of the journey "You should have...." SQUIRE should not generate unnecessary clash situations. The answer would be to give staff discretion in letting customers keep tickets if they request them. This seems not to be a problem with the same operator's franchise elsewhere in the UK. It must be assumed that SQUIRE is at fault.

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

Q14 comments: Complaints of paying passengers should always be taken seriously, even if some prove to be unreasonable complaints. Perhaps especially so now that Passenger Focus does not have the capacity to treat complaints as previously.

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: It is still thought that the real issue is passengers having to stand all the way from Glasgow to Edinburgh on a Saturday in a short formation train when it is quite clear there is ample spare rolling stock available but doing nothing. The worry about increasing the 10 minute rule is where does it stop? How many ScotRail journeys are between, say, 10 and 15 minutes in duration. Some examples given in the consultation involved long journeys, admittedly with specific reasons. Some of this overcrowding makes it most uncomfortable for the longer distance passengers who may have seats. We like to see crowded trains but should not plan for overcrowding on journeys over 10 minutes except in unusual circumstances.

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: Depends which way the question is asked. Yes, more use should be made of interchange stations, no, through trains should not be

reduced. There should be more emphasis on providing local trains which feed into non-stop/limited stop, long distance trains at major centres. One of the key hubs is/should be, for southern Scotland, Carlisle. With WCML trains hardly stopping at Motherwell, none at Carstairs and only one a day at Lockerbie a major part of Scotland does not have access to London trains.

The question may have been aimed at certain trains having a relatively less patronised middle section or outer section of route but it would not be practical to, say, change trains at Bathgate and then change again at Airdrie. It is agreed that there cannot be frequent trains from everywhere to everywhere. In the past the "Transport Authorities" have often talked down changing trains in that it is not attractive to passengers and, to be fair, a lot of effort has gone into producing an operating network has very few short branch lines. Most of our services are now integrated into long along "rural mainlines" or "regional mainlines" which work well..

Connections with bus services seem pretty hopeless unless legislation is changed. At present if one bus operator actually decides to connect with trains then another one will come along with a wrecking operation. Now, why did the Scottish Government decide against its previous policy of more bus re-regulation?

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: There is a concern that services which are too frequent are squeezing out, or preventing, other services connecting communities. There is also the issue that short frequent trains are not the most cost-effective way of running a railway, even if everybody wants a frequent service. The truth is, however, that train operators themselves want to run very frequent services on some popular routes to the exclusion of others. On the other hand they seem to want to make first trains later and last trains earlier (as bus companies do). Therefore Transport Scotland should continue to specify services, frequency, first and last trains. Negotiation may be helpful. However, Transport Scotland must serve all Scotland, not just a few favoured routes. There are some occasions where the present/previous franchisee has provided extra services at their own behest which were refused by Transport Scotland and its predecessor. Nothing is simple.

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

Q18 comments: A fairly prescriptive specification is essential. Franchisees could negotiate upwards.

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

Q19 comments: By negotiation, by allowing profit and by considering third party operators. However, there can be innovative good and innovative bad as far as passengers are concerned. By definition the exact nature of "Innovation" cannot be predicted.

A case is made as an example in 5.4, "Actual capacity issues", about the poor loadings on the Motherwell to Cumbernauld Line. This is the quickest means of travel between Motherwell and Coatbridge stations. There is probably not much social linkage between Cumbernauld and former Lanarkshire heavy industrial towns. However, it was understood that this service would be extended to Falkirk or Stirling to make at an important cross-country link roughly paralleling the M73 but that has not been realised. Also, the service is subject to frequent cancellation at very short notice, even if the train is standing ready in the platform, and often completely unexplained, undermining passenger credibility in the service. It may be a "chicken and egg" situation but there are strong reasons why this is not a good example.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: To allow families to live and work without having to have a car. To reduce road congestion and exhaust emissions. To make better use of off-peak train services. To allow a typical car journey, which is not necessarily a simple out and back journey, to be made by train. There is still too much emphasis on all single journey tickets being at peak rate. Also passengers are scared of being accused of cheating if they try and use tickets honestly for more circular journeys. Generally train fares are too expensive and tickets too restricted. The difference between peak and off-peak could be increased but a shoulder peak fare would make it too complicated. On several Scottish services a "double peak" occurs (one before and one after off-peak fares are valid). A practice in other franchises seems to be to extend the peak fare to later and later.

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: Basically all standard class fares. Franchisees can experiment with lower fares or, for first class, higher fares. Train fares seem to have risen more than car costs per mile, disadvantaging the poor and damaging the environment. Scotland will not get better value out of the railway by discouraging paying passengers.

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: While the aim should be to reduce taxpayer contribution this should be by cost efficiency and mainly based on increasing passenger use. Note the generally reducing cost of Network Rail, per mile. The cost of other modes should be considered such as a £2Bn additional road bridge for which the users do not want to pay any extra.

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: Guess at 50%. Few passengers are really in a position to switch. Cheaper peak fares are needed but may overcrowd capacity. Cheaper off-peak fares may not make people switch but may increase patronage by those who would not otherwise travel by train. Railway authorities have put many, many years thought into the peak to off-peak price ratio and may have got it to best practical levels even if the 20% differential quoted in the consultation does not seem nearly enough to influence travel times. It is possible rail managers have worked towards optimum income yield rather than best use of capacity. Reductions in off-peak fares to increase the differential, at least for a trial period, should be supported. The issue of “off-peak singles”, while more complex than it first appears, should be addressed.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Each station should be taken on its merits, there has been far too much quoting of global theories to make excuses against stations. Hardly ever should stations be closed. How many stations were wrongly closed in the past on the basis that “everybody” would soon have a car? How times have changed. We should be working towards the day when almost everybody can access a station without having to buy a car first. Some stations have a clear need and value beyond their commercial or statistical performance (or predicted performance). There is some lack of trust that station statistics are correctly monitored and surely now predictive models for new stations have been discredited. Train service patterns must be available to serve minor stations without prejudice to services between main centres and which can act as connections to “Hubs”.

The text of the consultation goes further than the Question with respect to station opening and closures. Stations within one mile of each other is no

standard for closure. It seems that all those scientific statistical methods are suddenly dropped for a “gossip” of less than a mile separation. Perhaps that is the way it should be? How about a station at least one every 10 miles along a rail route? Can a gap of 48 miles between stations be justified? Only in Southern Scotland, apparently. However, there is respect for the commitment to open stations as it had been assumed that transport Scotland totally opposed new stations.

There is concern about the statistics of low use stations. All these stations have issues, particularly a very poor train service level – “chicken and egg”, perhaps. These need to be looked at individually as they surely would be in a statutory sense.. Breich has a long history which is well known, but take, for example, Achnashellach. In the statistics from (?) Network Rail the number of scheduled stops is compared with passenger usage. It does not seem to make it clear that Achnashellach is a request stop on a relatively slow speed railway (with 60 year old track components?). It can also be imagined that many users do not buy tickets stating from or to Achnashellach. Usage is low but it is an important tourist station with mountain peaks very close-by approaching 3000ft high and the Torridons within easy hiking distance. This will not be an easy station to close without objections. The costs of station infrastructure are an unfortunate consequence of the high standards thought necessary without reference to the situation. As there is no street lighting in the vicinity normal persons will be carrying a torch after dark. As it is the facilities now in place are most welcome. The example is just to illustrate general unhappiness with the way the consultation has approached the issue. Perhaps some stations can be closed if truly better locations are provided, as at Addiewell.

The Consultation, in 7.11 welcomes views on what locations may be more appropriate for stations (hardly using direct language!). Everyone will be pleased that Transport Scotland is considering locations that could offer the greatest benefits to Scotland rather than comply with modelling formulae. The Scottish population pays taxes to support train and ferry services but some large areas have neither. Since 1965 the authorities have turned a deliberate blind eye to rail access in Southern Scotland in the areas of the WCML and ECML. The large gaps between existing stations is a blot on Scotland found nowhere else in the UK.

Scotland needs about new 5 “halts” on the WCML and at least 2 on the ECML. Experimental if need be, lower temporary standards if needs be, without long distance trains stopping and without reducing journey times. It would make use of the “Hub” concept at Carstairs and Carlisle.

Transport Scotland should also look at regional hospitals and perhaps object to locations with poor public transport, of which there are many. By coincidence Monklands Hospital (recently saved by the Scottish Government) is close to Cutdyke Station, one of the “within One mile” stations?. Wishaw

General Hospital was built between two passenger railways with a promise of a station but fell victim to the “Too difficult” syndrome. There are lots of options! The same consideration should apply to the State Hospital where previous managers have emphasised the importance, not just of staff travel, but of relatives being able to visit patients.

Overall, the concern for extended journey times is considered deliberately negative. Railway networks have traditionally found ways to provide two tier services. It is not supposed that the re-opening of Laurencekirk Station has crashed passenger numbers on the Aberdeen Line. The policy of allowing people the alternative to travel without using a motorcar is just as important as that of reducing journey times.

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: Scottish national administrations have a poor record on new stations as they appear to believe only services between main centres matter. Therefore it is essential that third parties can propose and promote new stations/services. Local authorities are clearly more democratic than what are effectively quangos and should be encouraged to propose and promote stations without threats from civil servants. However, local authorities have been so starved of funds they can hardly afford to continue their statutory duties and cannot be held responsible for funding. In Scotland it seems unlikely that a “local business” could afford to propose a new station. Prestwick Airport was the obvious example where even Strathclyde PTE at one stage threatened that if a station was opened then PTE trains would refuse to serve it. There are disbenefits in that some proposals are in totally the wrong location with the “authorities” showing no professional judgement. The new Blackridge Station is the obvious example, built in totally the wrong location because of a series of events those responsible for the railway network declined to control. First the authorities wanted no intermediate stations. A house builder offered some funding if the station was located at their development on the outskirts of the community (a long walk and not on a bus route). The offer of funding is believed to be a small proportion and the house builder ceased trading before any construction started. We are now left with an out-of-town station that really needs a car for access.

Beyond this is the issue of how even the most simple of stations have become very costly and also the various geometric guidelines used to refuse new station locations but which, apparently, can be ignored if the various authorities so wish, example Armadale. Transport Scotland should support local authorities and communities in protecting station sites and trackbeds from adverse development in line with original Scottish Parliament guidelines.

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: The present system is best. Network Rail (or similar) should be responsible for the long term, safety and significant infrastructure. The leading franchisee for immediate, passenger related improvement and attractiveness,

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

Q27 comments: The transport authorities should start by listening to local communities and not dismissing their views out of hand. At some stations the transport authorities have moved to encourage local community support despite reservations on safety. There seems to be a fine dividing line between dismissing local communities or accepting their support. Industry partners should be congratulated on the progress made so far.

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

Q28 comments: Each station should be assessed on its merits rather than categorised. Scotland does, however, depend on a large number of simple, unstaffed stations. The expense of bringing all stations up to high standards of facilities is unaffordable and counter-productive. On the other hand, there are certain stations with relatively low passenger numbers which come into their own at times of disruption and need facilities available. In fact, rail industry partners should (and probably do) consider the scenes last year at airports where disruption resulted in massive crowds and a danger to the wellbeing of travellers, including families with children. There should be a category of experimental stations where lower standards are allowed, even for an experimental period. There is no safety risk because many existing stations have had derogations on standards even though they are longstanding, permanent stations. Which is more important? What is the risk assessment?

Cross-border services

29. Should cross-border services continue to go north of Edinburgh? In operating alongside ScotRail services, how do cross-border services benefit passengers and taxpayers? And who should specify these services, the Department of Transport or the Scottish Ministers?

Q29 comments: It would be a major loss to Scotland's economy if these services were terminated at Edinburgh. The whole idea of hubs is supported but certain through services are far more productive. On these long journeys many passengers, passengers important for our economy, would change to different modes of travel or go to other countries. For the time being DfT should specify these services in cooperation with Scottish authorities. As it happens these trains have high passenger capacity (proper trains) and some run at peak times and Scottish Authorities may not be capable of sourcing

sufficient rolling stock. The whole issue seems to have arisen because any new trains (designed by DfT) will not be as capable as the 30 year old trains presently used and because the capability of changing traction (without detraining passengers) has been lost at Edinburgh. What is not clear (to us) is if the DfT or Train operators do or do not want to continue these services.

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: Answered above in Q29. Terminating services would be counterproductive and any benefits not realisable. Note the similar situation at Birmingham New Street which has caused widespread complaints.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Scottish Government has been successful in procuring trains to a much better standard than the DfT and in England. The professional, private sector companies should be best at providing trains but have not been successful. More standard trains should reduce costs and it seems unfortunate the latest procurement of trains for the Ayrshire lines are a new design and not necessarily compatible with other trains and routes. It is unfortunate that, across the UK, trains are now designed with inflexible fixed formations, typically trains can either be 3 cars or 6 cars but not 2,4,5,7 or 8. It should be possible to match better train capacity to customer demand. With increased passenger demand and less justification for very high frequency the railway should move to longer, flexible formation trains which would be lighter, more comfortable for passengers, have lower stepping heights and would be cheaper in total life cost than fixed small formation, distributed power trains. Incidentally, they would be an additional incentive to Scottish tourism.

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

Q32 comments: The main concern appears to be a mix of seating arrangements, seats which align with windows, toilet provision and through corridor connections. Most trains in Scotland seem to have reasonable seating arrangements although some individuals complain of insufficient legroom, insufficient width room (on 3+2 arrangements), uncomfortable seats and seatbacks too high with a claustrophobic effect. Seats which do not align with windows show contempt for passengers especially as most arose from first class accommodation designs aligning with windows but using the same bodysell for standard class. Toilets are now seen as essential on all but the shortest of journeys especially as very few stations have toilets. The problem

being to keep at least one toilet functional seems to need two toilets per train set. Corridor connections would seem to be productive for all parties (except drivers?) especially as trains should become longer to accommodate rising passenger numbers. Present catering on trains seems a reasonable balance apart from the tea cup scandal (end of franchise?). It should be as easy as possible for passengers to know what catering is available before boarding. Mobile phone reception and wi-fi seems to divide passengers. Some consider it essential some a distinct disturbance or anti-social. It is important for the Scottish economy to have suitable trains on longer journeys and tourist routes. Good seats, good windows, reliable toilets and potential luggage/bike space must contribute to the economy even if they are a nuisance to service providers. A major issue is that trains get moved around Scotland, quite sensibly, to reduce costs. In fact there are few short distance train workings. This suggests that all new trains should be specified to be interchangeable and to high standards. New train designs tend to be noisier, with more vibration and with higher stepping distances than trains of 40 years ago. Specifiers should keep in mind that more flexible, better quality trains may be the future. It is, however, fair to say that trains in the ScotRail franchise are relatively good compared to other franchises and often better than some so-called inter-city franchise rolling stock.

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: It is understood there are mixed views, but nobody wants to pay.

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: The advantage of first class is the value to operators' profits and the value to the Scottish economy. There seems to be good reasons to retain first class but much greater difficulty in producing modern trains with sufficient advantages to warrant high first class fares. It is difficult to think other than first class may segregate passengers with different views of social behaviour. As long as it pays, or as long as the franchisee thinks it pays, it should be retained. Rail operators through time have invited well-mannered couples to "sample" first class accommodation when standard is overcrowded and first is relatively empty.

Attempts by ScotRail to "reserve" "table bays" for family groups have been noted and appreciated but is difficult to enforce. Canadian National simply tells single passengers to move!

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

Q35 comments: The ability of train staff to supervise any unsocial behaviour whether it is from alcohol on trains or before boarding trains. Generally, alcohol consumption is restricted to licensed premises where alcohol consumption can be properly supervised. Trains cannot, in practice, meet these standards of supervision and it seems inevitable that alcohol will, eventually, be banned from ordinary trains although supervision of this ban will continue to be an issue. Rail industry partners, including BTP, are to be commended on implementation of football day alcohol bans which still cause problems on trains in England. Intrinsically football day train bans refer to possession of alcohol not just consumption. There would be difficulties enforcing this on people with shopping. There would also be a detrimental effect on the business case of more special trains and the sleeper service. In effect, it is not yet practical to ban alcohol consumption on all trains.

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

Q36 comments: The biggest single improvement is to stop train information systems giving information on other matters. They are for train information and not to be constantly broken into with warnings about luggage or slips. Where train users can be made aware of risks and procedures without spoiling immediate train information then all well and good but safety warnings should be about individual issues (backed by risk assessment). The constant frequent interruptions or obstructive notices about, say, "it may rain and it may be slippy" are nonsense.

Good progress is made on information using various high tech IT methods but many passengers rely on low tech. and should not be forgotten, especially where train services are completely disrupted.

Some on-board recorded announcements/displays are not being re-set once out of synchronisation and become worse than useless. Is this a technical or an inherent problem?

There is a further issue of rolling stock and information. It was noted that the rolling stock livery was described. The issue is that for the past few years ScotRail trains have carried the word "First" on the outside and inside. Anyone can see the scope for confusion. "The first first train, or the second first train at platform No...." Or "This whole train appears to be first class, what shall we do?" It is treating rail users with contempt. ScotRail is the brand. It is recommended that Transport Scotland bans any numeric names, any smutty names or any cowboy names from Scottish rolling stock. It is a sad day when Government departments are better at choosing business names than the private sector!

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, Scotland should continue to specify sleeper services. It is the value that it brings to Scotland that matters. It should continue to serve the present locations, probably more, not less.

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: As the service operates some 300 miles south of the Scottish border and operates at night with extremely long support lines and as much of the operational work is contracted out anyway it is accepted that a separate franchise may have advantages although, patently, DfT for England and Wales could not be trusted with the specification.

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:

Travel on the sleeper service shows the wide variety of people using it and the variety of reasons for doing so. From the apparently very poor to the very rich and it appears that the very rich are bringing money to the Scottish economy.

The appeal is to start work or leisure in, say, London or Scotland, at an early hour having had sleep. For some people it may not be a good sleep but it is much better sleep than all the worry, with lack of sleep, of getting to station or airport at very early hours of the morning or driving overnight. Some people just want to get the journey over without wasting “waking time”. It is also the only service to London from South Lanarkshire. Earlier and later day trains are a good developments (but poorly used at the Scottish end) and will not make the sleeper redundant for at least 20 years and probably never to the North of Scotland.. Buses give good competition, especially to locations or on days not served by the sleeper but are generally uncomfortable and most

people prefer trains to buses.

Although this group does not represent Aberdeen, Inverness or Fort William it is thought these are the best northern destinations, along with the many intermediate Highland stops. Oban probably has practical operational difficulties for a sleeper service. While accepting the question is valid, Fort William (including Mallaig) would seem to have equivalent connectivity.

The facilities provided have been developed over very many years to give the best mix value for both passengers and taxpayer support. It is difficult to see how they could be improved. En-suite facilities would be expensive to provide on a train (or bus or plane) but it is certain some customers would want to pay for it. Better supervision would be helpful for the seat-only coach (as it would be on overnight buses).

Overall there have been niggles with booking reservations. It is surprising how often the sleeper is said to be fully booked or that bookings cannot be accepted for certain stations on the sleeper timetable. Is the sleeper really that busy, the reservation system poor or are they holding something back? Lack of Saturday night sleeper services is an issue, although the reasons are understood.

The present service operation has been developed to give best value and both Central and Northern Scotland (and Carlisle) should continue to be served. It had been hoped that Edinburgh and Glasgow could regain separate dedicated trains. Alternatives in case of disruption to airline services should be considered as should eventual European sleeper services.

A very high standard of monitoring and treatment of wheel flats is essential.

Long term consideration should be given to a suitable vehicle which could be used as a basis for new sleeper coaches. At present the old coaches seem far better than anything else likely to be available even if there is a developing spares problem and a hundred or so coaches were stupidly (and anti-Scottishly) sold off for scrap or abroad.

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: Much of this is detail although covered by UK and EU regulations. The priority is to switch travel from less to more environmentally

friendly modes.

FINAL COMMENT: As there is no other space for an overall comment, here it is.

Both Transport Scotland and First ScotRail have been roundly criticised at times but on close reading of the consultation and its questions it soon becomes clear that Transport Scotland has done a lot of detailed hard work maintaining service specification and standards, more than any authority has ever done before in Scotland, and that First ScotRail have also made important voluntary improvements to the train service entirely at their own behest.