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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: No comments to make.

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

Q2 comments: No comments to make.

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

Q3 comments: No comments to make.

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

Q4 comments: No comments to make.

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

Q5 comments: No comments to make.

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

Q6 comments: No comments to make.

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

Q7 comments: No comments to make.

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

Q8 comments: No comments to make.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Good performance should be rewarded at an appropriately high level and, similarly, poor performance should be heavily penalised. However the bar, in terms of benchmarks and targets, should be set much higher than at present. On time should mean exactly that not a few minutes late. Perhaps, the refunding of fares to passengers on trains arriving excessively late could be considered.

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: The performance regime should be aligned to actual routes or service groups in order that individual issues surrounding specific areas can be more easily identified, assessed and performance targets adjusted, if required.

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

Q11 comments: Passengers expect trains to run as scheduled not some approximation to that. For passengers using intermediate stations, a late train can be inconvenient and irritating whereas an early train can be completely useless.

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

Q12 comments: Slightly longer journey times would be preferable if performance levels and punctuality are enhanced. Persistently late trains can be very disruptive and inconvenient to passengers and turn them away from rail travel.

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: Such a regime should be retained and enhanced and should incorporate both the franchise and Network Rail. Further, the views of passengers whether through surveys as at present or by other means such as Passenger Experience Satisfaction cards should be taken into account.

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

Q14 comments: As referred to in Q13, train and station quality could be assessed by means of Passenger Experience Satisfaction cards. These could be along the lines of those used in the hotel industry but containing a maximum of, say, five questions. A monthly prize draw could be used to encourage passengers to complete such cards.

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: Ideally, standing on a train for however long hardly represents an equivalent value for money as being seated despite the tickets guaranteeing passengers will only be conveyed between the stations stated on such tickets. Further, passengers standing on trains could be a safety issue in the event of an accident or could restrict emergency services in the event of a medical emergency. However, the choice is either to increase capacity to allow all passengers to be seated or to continue with allowing passengers to stand. The former will, of course, come at a cost. The present target standing time of ten minutes seems reasonable although, on trains with first class accommodation, discounted fares could be offered to standard class passengers for seats in first class in the same way as week-end first class offers on cross border trains.

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: Where possible, interchange facilities should be utilised and promoted provided that passenger inconvenience is minimised. Indeed, through cross border services should terminate at Edinburgh with onward journeys provided by the franchisee. However, to make such transfers as simple and as convenient as possible, connecting trains should depart from adjacent platforms and baggage storage and handling should be as simple as possible. Allowing the franchisee to operate onward trains would obviously be attractive proposition to that operator.

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: Apart from the setting of a minimum level of service by the Government, such matters should be left in the hands of the franchisee. See Q18. However, one facility currently lacking is the provision of ticket vending machines that can recognise and dispense tickets to concession card holders

and the franchise specification should incorporate the requirement for such vending machines to be sited in all stations with immediate effect.

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

Q18 comments: Targeted specification should be the preferred option as it offers the franchisee the scope to maximise the revenue potential of heavily used routes whilst protecting those routes that are economically less viable but are still necessary for local needs or for tourism.

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

Q19 comments: Perhaps by means of allowing the franchisee to offer merchandise for sale on tourist routes or the like along the lines of that offered on commercial rail tour trains or on Calmac ferries. Also by perhaps allowing the franchisee to actively promote routes where they see an economic case for so doing such as a much greater use of special offers or discounted fares.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: To provide as simple a fare structure as is possible. Whether such could incorporate a system based on concentric fare zones in the greater Glasgow area is something that could be explored. Further, as the consultation document says, smart ticketing will offer much more scope to vary fares dependant on time of travel and passenger demand provided that such fare variations are made clear to passengers.

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: The current rationale for regulated and unregulated fares seems to provide the right balance.

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: As the passenger revenue contributions can only be increased by means of fare increases or by increased passenger demand, the only means of balancing the funding can be by way of taxpayer subsidy.

However, whilst every means should be explored into how to increase passenger demand within the given capacity, fare increases should be fixed at as low a rate as possible in order not to diminish that passenger demand. Further, consistency over the fare structure should be maintained as, to apply higher increases to recently enhanced sections of the network, would be seen to be unfair as passengers would expect that periodic network enhancement should take place as a matter of course.

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: In order to achieve a shift to off-peak travel where such was possible, a discount of nearer to one third on the peak time fare would be more likely to achieve success. That is, the same level of discount that is available to holders of Railcards. A differential of 20% or less is hardly sufficient to have much impact on off-peak passenger demand. Perhaps, the introduction of season tickets valid only for shoulder or off-peak travel may have some attraction. However, as is said, the introduction of smart ticketing, which cannot come quickly enough given that London has operated such a system for years, should give much greater flexibility in tailoring fares to passenger demand.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Whilst it may seem appropriate or even desirable to close a station that is in close proximity to another station, that is making the assumption that each of the two stations are serving the self same place. In other words, that two stations on the greater Glasgow network which are located less than a mile from one another are only there to serve travel to and from Glasgow city centre. This is not usually the case as stations located close by one another will usually serve many other places which are not mutually accessible.

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: Third party ownership of all or part of a station may be a reasonable means of generating income provided that there is such ownership is commercially attractive to that third party such as the creation of a retail outlet within the station. Further, greater use could be made of the advertising potential offered by station walls, fencing, etc.. And there is always the possibility of sponsorship of a station or of a service though that may be seen by passengers and indeed by the public at large, to be a step too far if such would entail a company's or organisation's name being annexed to that of the station or service.

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: No comments to make.

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

Q27 comments: No comments to make.

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

Q28 comments: The idea of station categorisation is a good one and the means of that categorisation can be in accordance with the type of train service that each station caters for such a main line trains, suburban commuting trains, rural trains, etc. Sub categories can also be by the number of passengers using a given station on a daily basis. As to the facilities provided at each category of station, these should always include a shelter

and information boards and, in the case of larger stations, ticket vending machines, car parking facilities where possible, toilets and restrooms. Where station usage is at a high level, such stations should be staffed and provided with a ticket office. Shops could only be where there is capacity within the station building for such.

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: Whilst through trains beyond Edinburgh are very attractive and convenient for passengers intending to make through journeys, the economic case for them must be very poor. So as stated before in Q16, it makes much more sense to terminate such cross border trains at Edinburgh. Transfer to connecting services, however, must be made as seamless as possible. This would then eliminate cross border services operating alongside ScotRail services with the obvious benefits and advantages that would offer both ScotRail and the taxpayer. As cross border services serve to transport passengers from England to Scotland as well as from Scotland to England, the specification for such services should be the responsibility of both the Scottish Government and the UK Department of Transport.

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: As in Q16 and Q29, such services should terminate at Edinburgh. Other than the benefits of such to ScotRail and to the Scottish taxpayer, having Edinburgh as a hub would allow much greater flexibility for onward connectivity.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Allowing the franchisee the flexibility with regard to the procurement of rolling stock would allow more suitable and cost effective vehicles to be deployed on routes where such would be appropriate such as the utilisation of lightweight diesel railcars on rural routes with a low usage. However, as the cost and operational benefits of electric traction seem to be clear cut, the electrification of all highly utilised routes should be progressed without delay. Indeed, the proposal to convert the present diesel services to south Glasgow suburban routes such as to East Kilbride and Barrhead to an electric light rail system seems a most cost effective and environmentally advantageous way of providing these services.

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

Q32 comments: On shorter journeys, no additional facilities to those currently available seem necessary. However, on longer routes such as those in the north and west of Scotland, a catering service of some sort should be available.

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: No comments to make.

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: No comments to make.

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

Q35 comments: As in buses, the consumption of alcohol should only be permitted on trains on which there is a trolley service or a permanent buffet. In other words, if alcoholic drink cannot be purchased on a given train then consumption of it on that train should not be permitted.

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

Q36 comments: Other than the need to ensure that all stations and all trains are provided with customer information screens and public address systems, the one area which needs improved and modernised is that of reserved seat information though this is mostly but not exclusively on cross border trains. The means of indicating reserved seats by means of a ticket clipped to the rear of the seat is inconvenient, wasteful and time consuming and should be replaced by a screen above each row of seats which indicates by means of colour or such like, which seats are reserved or are available at any given point in the journey. With smart technology, this is very easily attainable.

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: If the need for sleeper services to London is deemed to be necessary, desirable and viable, it would be difficult to place them solely into the hands of the operating company without running the risk that they could choose to withdraw such services altogether.

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: Contracting the sleeper services separate from the main ScotRail franchise might be worth exploring and might prove an attractive proposition to a potential franchisee not interested in tendering for the much larger national franchise.

39. We would be interested in your views in the level and type of service that the Caledonian Sleeper Services should provide. Including:

- What is the appeal of the Caledonian Sleeper Service, and if there were more early and late trains would the appeal of the sleeper services change?
- What is the value of sleeper services to Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen and are these the correct destinations, for example would Oban provide better connectivity?
- What facilities should the sleeper services provide and would you pay more for better facilities?

Q39 comments: The appeal which sleeper trains have over faster day trains and flying lies in the relaxing experience which travelling at night and in comfort allows the passenger. Even a day train taking under five hours to reach London from Glasgow or Edinburgh still uses up a substantial portion of that day unless it departs very early in the morning or early in the evening, both of which are relatively unattractive due to connections to and from the

point of departure. And flying is becoming less and less attractive due to the need for and time taken by security and again to the need for connections to and from the airports. Sleeper bus services can largely be disregarded as they will have a very limited appeal. The big downside with sleeper services in the UK is the lack of space within the cabins due to the constrictions of the British loading gauge, especially when compared to that provided on mainland Europe with its more accommodating Berne loading gauge. To overcome these limitations would, of course, incur a gigantic level of investment both in Scotland and in England. However, some modifications could be made to the existing rolling stock or built into any new stock to ensure that cabins are less in number but are more spacious with en-suite facilities but, of course, this would detrimentally affect the capacity of each coach. Nonetheless, dedicated promotion of the sleeper service coupled with an appropriate fare increase could ensure that with increased usage, there would be no loss of revenue should such changes be made. As to facilities on board sleeper trains, the bar provided at the head of the train is good and should be maintained but some level of purchasable hot food should be available both in the evening and in the morning. With regard to sleeper trains to and from destinations north of Glasgow and Edinburgh, only the market can determine whether or not such destinations are viable and are the correct ones.

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: No comments to make.