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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: Dual focus may allow some elements to operate more profitably, but customer service would have to be safeguarded.

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

Q2 comments: No comment

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

Q3 comments: The service needs to be maintained even in a severe downturn in the economy: this needs to be reflected in the risk support mechanism.

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

Q4 comments: Profit share should be applied to enable Government to recoup some of their investment in times of economic growth

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

Q5 comments: No comment

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

Q6 comments: No comment

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

Q7 comments: No comment

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

Q8 comments: Financial sanctions

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Incentivising good performance is important to encourage more of it!

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: No comment

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

Q11 comments: Passengers are concerned with reliability and punctuality rather than speed. The performance regime should focus on measuring these elements.

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

Q12 comments: Passengers are more concerned at getting to their destination at the expected time. Performance should therefore dominate/

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: Should cover all.

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

Q14 comments: regular inspections/ surveys of passengers

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: Ten minutes is the maximum acceptable standing time. Passengers are already deciding not to use the train as they have to stand. Most trains do not have suitable areas for standing and do not take account of health and safety for standing passengers, especially children.

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: Changing from rail to rail increases the discomfort and inconvenience of a train journey. Many stations do not have suitable waiting areas for passengers. There is not a reliable connection between trains and if the first train is late there is too high a risk that the second train will leave before the passenger reaches it. Potential passengers are more likely to take their cars if there is no direct service. Making use of more interchange stations for rail to rail services does nothing for the passenger.

On the other hand there does need to be more use made of "rail to other modes" services. In rural areas, passengers need to change from a train to a bus but currently there is no co-ordination between when the train arrives and the bus leaves. This also adds to the inconvenience of travelling by public transport. People would be more willing to use train/bus over their car if there was less waiting around during the journey.

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 It would be great if the franchisee listened to customer demand and used their findings to determine frequency and journey time. This would involve talking to people who are not customers as well however, as many people are not using the train currently because of the poor frequency of the trains. They would be more likely to use it if the train timetable delivered the service they required. For example, at the moment it is possible to travel into work in Aberdeen by train from Portlethen but the return service does not fit in with when the majority of people finish work and so commuters are not using the service. Similarly, parents are not using the service during the day because they cannot get into Aberdeen, spend a reasonable time there, and travel home again during the hours of the school day.

The Government is no more likely to understand the needs of passengers than the franchisee unless they ask the local people directly.

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

Q18 comments: no comment

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

Q19 comments: no comment

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: The fares policy should be fair for all passengers.

It should be cheaper for two adults to travel to their destination by train than for them to take the car.

At the moment passengers using intermediate stations between large centres cannot always access the same cheap fares or special offers as people travelling between larger towns/cities.

There are too many variations on offer when looking for cheap tickets on the internet: there needs to be a more straight forward and accessible system.

Continued support should be given to groups such as "Friends and Family" "Young People" and "Over 55s" when travelling by train. Special offers during school holidays should be used to make it possible for positive use of recreation time.

The purpose of the fares policy should be to encourage more people to travel by train rather than by car thus bringing benefits to the environment.

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: All fares should be regulated by Government so that it is cheaper for two adults to travel to their destination by train than for them to take the car.

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: Fares should not be increased as this would have the effect of reducing usage. By providing a better service, more passengers will be encouraged on to the trains and passenger revenue contributions will increase anyway.

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: Most people do not have the choice when they travel – they are going to work or to study or to an event and have particular time constraints so greater differentials between peak and off-peak fares would make little difference. It might be more effective to offer particular users greater discounts if they travel in off-peak times – ie the holders of friends and family, young person or Over 55 railcards.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:

Stations are required in areas where it would be of environmental benefit for people to travel by train rather than car.

Well-placed stations make it possible for people to take the train to work or to study and thus to look a bit further afield for opportunities, crucial in this economic climate.

Stations should offer an economical alternative to car travel – which is often too expensive for young people etc now given the costs of insurance etc.

Stations are required in suburban areas to enable young people to travel and make constructive use of their leisure time.

Stations enable people to live outside the city – taking some of the pressure off limited housing stock in the cities.

Stations should not be closed without first reviewing whether adjustments to the service provided and the timetable would increase the use made of them.

Stations should be determined by passenger need not by operator convenience.

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: Local authorities may have a better overview of the social and economic needs of an area which would better place them to propose a station or service.

The current system of funding local government would not enable local authorities to promote or fund a 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 comment

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

Q27 comments: Local communities want to support their local station. They just need services which meet their needs not the needs of the service provider in order for them to do so.

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

Q28 comments: Stations which serve as interchanges should be designated as such and have a range of passenger services such as warm waiting areas, cafes, toilets and changing areas, newsagents, food shops, tourist information, car hire.

All stations should have warm waiting areas open at all times, toilets, bus interconnections, free car parking,

All stations should have some information about the local area – amenities, heritage, a map etc to encourage people to visit as tourists.

Cross-border services

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

Q29 comments: Yes, cross border services should continue north of Edinburgh. Aberdeen is a major economic centre and requires good links cross-border. These are of benefit to both passengers and taxpayers. The Dept of Transport should take responsibility for maintaining this service.

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: Waverley cannot cope with the existing number of passengers – it is a very uncomfortable station already to have to wait at now due to the sheer numbers. There would be no benefits from making passengers change here – in fact people might start to consider plane or car travel as a preferable option, neither of which would benefit the country.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: No comment

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

Q32 comments: Seats for passengers. Toilets. Refreshments trolley. Cycle racks. Short commuter routes clearly require fewer such facilities.

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: Cross border services, trains between Scottish cities should see greater broadband investment.

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: Needs investigation re level of demand for first-class: if more seats were available standard class, then people might be more willing to use it.

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

Q35 comments: I would ban alcohol on trains – too many passengers have had their journeys disrupted by the few who are drinking.

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

Q36 comments: Electronic boards at all stations and on all trains. Notice given as soon as possible when a train is delayed.

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: Sleeper services offer an important cross border link for people travelling to work. Yes, should be continued.

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: Could be – if this would improve the quality of the service offered.

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 sleeper allows busy people to make better use of their time. Certainly Aberdeen is an important destination given its economic importance and accessibility to tourist destinations

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: Reductions in our environmental impact