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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: I think there are conflicts if there is a dual focus eg economic/social, and the sleeper network highlights that the sum is greater than the parts, by bringing economic benefits to tourist areas.

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

Q2 comments: Don't think any constitutional changes should impact this. The current type of agreement seems to have worked well – an initial bedding in period and reassessment, then an extension if satisfactory.

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

Q3 comments: No view

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

Q4 comments: No view

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

Q5 comments: Can the franchisee not arrange sponsorships for limited periods eg Commonwealth Games, Edinburgh Festival etc?

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

Q6 comments: No view

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

Q7 comments: No view

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

Q8 comments: The power to remove the franchise.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Certainly, poor performance needs to be penalised. As to incentivising good performance, surely that depends on how revenues are split and whether both sides can gain?

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: If the services can be neatly grouped and it can be argued that each has unique features, then it may be feasible to split it. There may be the danger though that good performance in one area is offset by poor performance in another. You may actually have more clout for improvement if there is one performance measure for one franchise, then everyone is clear where they stand.

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

Q11 comments: No view

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

Q12 comments: No view

13. Is a Service Quality Incentive Regime required? And if so should it cover all aspects of stations and service delivery, or just those being managed through the franchise?

Q13 comments: No view

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

Q14 comments: No view

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: Need to look at how capacity can be increased. That may entail there being fewer sits and more standing space – if so, that suggests longer standing times are needed. But it certainly is no excuse for trying to find other solutions eg additional coaches.

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: No. Interchanging does not suit all passengers, especially the aged, the infirm and those travelling with children or luggage. Given that many station platforms are cold windy places (and interchanges often require changing platforms), that is not ideal for those people. It may not improve overall performance eg two trains being late rather than just one, if an interchange train has to be held up for a late incoming service!

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: I think better left to the franchisee, but they need to be able to meet some overall performance level agreed by Government.

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

Q18 comments: Targeted

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

Q19 comments: Certainly, there should be some form of incentivisation.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Pricing should aim to optimise use of the network, not optimise return. The aim should be to run trains that are operating near capacity as often as possible.

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: Suggest government sets the longer distance prices, while the companies have more flexibility with the commuter fares.

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: Over time, I'm not sure there will be any real difference between RPI and CPI as the base for the increase. Which better reflects how the costs arise eg fuel?

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: it is highly unlikely that you can reduce peak time passenger numbers by having sufficiently low off-peak fares. The aim with the off-peak fares is to attract more passengers to those services.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Needs public consultation. Difficult in rural areas to argue for their closure when there is limited alternative public services.

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: The main issue is the impact on services, especially in rural areas with single tracks in operation.

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 view

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

Q27 comments: No view

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

Q28 comments: Tourist stations provide a challenge between providing services (eg toilets) and having low maintenance (with limited use). Some stations have shelters, but they only keep the elements off you – but don't stop the howling gale chilling you!

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: These should continue, as they provide a direct link with London. In particular, the timing of them (on southbound journeys) probably makes them busier going south (when they provide the first main service going south from the north) than going north (when it potentially competes with other services, but provides additional commuter capacity).

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. I appreciate that there are only a limited number of cross-border services going north of Edinburgh, but some passengers (elderly/frail/tourists) would prefer NOT to have to change trains with luggage and the other problems (eg platform changes) that that entails.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Greater flexibility with other franchises/leasing companies?

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

Q32 comments: There needs to be the provision of power sockets on all trains – people are now so dependent on portable devices. See answer to Q33 as well.

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: Clearly the main routes – Edinburgh and Glasgow to Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen, Inverness and Fort William should be the priority. It should encompass the whole of the network, as dependence on mobile devices with wi-fi becomes even more commonplace.

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 view

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

Q35 comments: Priority is the comfort of passengers. Banning alcohol doesn't stop people behaving boorishly on the trains, but it makes the environment more pleasant. Policing an absolute ban however would take more time and resources, so the current policy of restricting it on certain days or journeys seems to strike the right balance.

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

Q36 comments: Provision either of more announcements (which people may still have difficulty hearing (or miss), or probably better is the provision of more scrolling messages or information screens in carriages that can be updated with the times the train is due to arrive at its stops, and any revisions to that.

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: It must be specified. It is a vital part of the service of transporting people in the UK. For instance, when there were no flights in the UK because of the volcanic ash, the sleepers were full – and demand exceeded supply. It is a far more convenient way to get from the centre of London to Scotland, without the aggravation of airport terminals. And it makes good use of precious time (overnight) which would otherwise be wasted.

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: I believe it should be integral to the ScotRail franchise to ensure a service that best meets the needs of the Scottish people.

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 benefit of the sleeper is that it makes use of the night to get from A to B. It is not to be underestimated that, for some people, it is seen as the only way to travel and arrive relaxed. There are a number of us who work in London and travel regularly north to live here, so bringing economic benefit to this region which frankly would not be possible without the sleeper. The alternative of air transport may suit some people, but the sleeper is serving all the communities north of Edinburgh, and many of them are nowhere near an airport with connections south. Similarly, it is possible to travel with baggage (eg skis) that are not easy to take on flights.

It is appreciated that demand fluctuates by the day of travel and the season. So increased services on Friday/Sunday evenings during the summer may attract demand – but that could perhaps be met by additional local services connecting at Glasgow or Edinburgh. Mid week services on the other hand may need special incentives to fill the berths.

I think Fort William is OK. If there was Oban demand, it would really have to connect with ferry sailings (and from memory I don't think it does). Maybe it

could be served by some local service from Crianlarich to Oban in the early morning/evening?

Of course we would all prefer better services, but some of it is the feasibility of doing so. Certainly, wi-fi (Q33) is a priority along with power supplies for portable items. And better more responsive heating/cooling in the carriages would help.

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 view