

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

Organisation Name

Friends of the Earth Tayside

Title Mr ☒ Ms ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ *Please tick as appropriate*

Surname

Llanwarne

Forename

Andrew

2. Postal Address

8 Glasclune Way

Broughty Ferry

Dundee

Postcode DD5 3TJ

01382 732457

andyllanwarne@hotmail.com

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

☐ No

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:

We would agree that the franchise should incentivise efficiency improvements and draw on international comparisons to show what is achievable, with inefficient working practices and excessive bureaucracy being removed and innovative ideas being encouraged. But it should also set out clear requirements for the service coverage and connectivity, specific priority improvements to be carried out, and indicate passenger outcome measures to be satisfied. Specific routes which are less economic to operate, but serve important social and environmental purposes, should be detailed. Rail services should where possible be incorporated into the development of new settlements and developments from the start, so rail becomes the default means of transport, and this may involve provision of loss-making services for the first few years.

It does sound as though all this might be most effectively achieved, and performance managed, through a dual focus franchise. However, an experiment like this might be difficult to marry with a longer franchise period, which has other advantages.

As a general point, when looking at the public subsidy for rail services, Scottish Government should take account of the wider costs and benefits within the transport, economic, social and environmental systems which rail travel is just a part of. There are significant tangible benefits in reducing road congestion, reducing need for parking space in cities, reducing need for road building and repair, improving air quality, reducing carbon emissions, improving public health, promoting economic activity, investment and tourism, as well as incalculable social benefits such as enabling families to get together, facilitating enjoyment of our cities and countryside, and making Scotland a more attractive place to live. Viewed in this light, i.e. with a joined-up perspective, the current levels of subsidy for rail services are not excessive.

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

Q2 comments:

A longer franchise – say, 12 years – makes sense to enable the operator to see through the benefits from investments, but with review/break points - say every 3 years – where performance will be reviewed, with the operator potentially losing the franchise if performance measures have not been met –

and these should not be seen as token exercises.

This should provide a suitable way of encouraging service improvements to be planned and implemented, and revised performance requirements could be included at the review stage to reflect changes in technology, society, and performance achieved elsewhere.

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

Q3 comments:

This should not be purely based on the level of GDP as there are other influences on levels of usage of rail services including motoring costs, road congestion, competition from coach travel, growth in teleconferencing, and the quality of the rail services and infrastructure themselves. A fuller economic and social analysis of rail demand in relation to different variables should be carried out to identify what would be an appropriate trigger for further revenue support to reflect factors outwith the control of the franchisee.

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

Q4 comments:

This would be appropriate, if risks from poor macro-economic performance are underwritten by the public through the state, then increased profits from improved macro-economic performance should likewise be shared with the public.

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

Q5 comments:

This should be managed by the franchisee in order to avoid operational conflicts or confusion for customers, for which the franchisee would still be responsible. The franchise could offer this as something which the successful franchisee might wish to test out, particularly where it could be a means of testing innovative ideas with less business risk to the franchisee. There could be some financial reward for the franchisee for testing and adopting innovative ideas from 3rd parties.

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

Q6 comments:

By setting a level of outcome targets after discussion with independent industry experts and representatives of passengers and freight users, then incorporating these into the franchise requirements with a 12-year franchise term and performance reviews/break points every 3 years. The incentive is, the company gets to keep the contract.

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:

Potential loss of franchise after 3 years for significant failings, and financial penalties and warnings of future loss of franchise for smaller failings. If there are some failings after the initial 3 years that do not justify withdrawal of the franchise, the next review period could be made shorter and the franchisee could be required to rectify these within 1 or 2 years or risk losing the franchise.

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 expected as the norm, but exceptional performance and innovation might be incentivised.

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 there are particular issues for specific routes or service groups then these should be reflected in the performance regime.

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

Q11 comments:

Set service quality outcome targets included as a major category within the performance regime and sanctions set as in "8" above.

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

Q12 comments:

Savings in journey times are worthwhile, but less important than reliability and quality of service so people can plan accordingly. There should be some

contingency built in to timings to allow real-time adjustment to make up time after small delays.

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:

Yes, a regime of this sort is required, carried out independently of the train operator, and it should reflect the entirety of the customer experience and underlying service delivery elements. It should be linked with the management of customer complaints.

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

Q14 comments:

There are lots of surveying techniques available, but they should be customer-centred. Focus groups are effective at testing out ideas and solutions, but take up people's time and are expensive to run.

A better approach could be a means of submitting comments using a mobile phone, linked to a 24-hour call-centre. It could capture and categorise general feedback on quality, but also be designed so that issues requiring urgent attention could be channelled immediately to the appropriate person for investigation and action (e.g. a blocked toilet or a bunch of rowdy and abusive passengers). This could help to improve passenger behaviour and encourage some more sensitive and vulnerable people to travel by train. There could be a prominent sign visible from all seats in the train, saying "To get attention to any urgent issue on this train, text 12345, or to give feedback and suggestions on the quality of service, text 56789." Urgent situations could be relayed immediately from the call centre to the ticket inspector on board the train and/or police at the next stop - a less dramatic alternative to pulling the communication chord.

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:

In reality nothing happens if people have to stand more than 10 minutes, which is not unusual. Ticket inspectors might be given the authority to require able-bodied passengers to give up their seat for the elderly, disabled, or infirm. Able-bodied people would usually rather stand for an hour in some discomfort than have to wait for a later train on a windswept platform.

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:

Although there are opportunities in terms of maximising the use of rolling stock, this could significantly reduce the quality of passenger experience especially for those people with a pile of luggage, for the elderly and for those with some physical impairment, and for parents with small children. Commuters on the other hand can easily hop off one train and onto another one to get to their destination more quickly, as they do with underground and light rail systems, but will be annoyed if there's a half-hour wait between trains. To some extent these different customer needs can be met by mixing some through-trains with more frequent interchange services.

Certainly from a Tayside perspective it is very important to retain some through train services to and from London, which it has been suggested might be stopped, requiring a change at Edinburgh.

More attention needs to be given to connectivity not only with other rail services, but also bus services, as currently there is a lack of the kind of co-ordination that people in other countries take for granted. Presumably this is due to deregulation, but the Scottish Government should be seeking a way to promote interconnectivity of transport modes including regional joint ticketing and possibly incentives for operators who collaborate willingly with other companies to provide a properly integrated public transport 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:

The Government should set out its expectations based on independent specialist advice, but there could be some negotiation with the franchisee before the start of the franchise and in each 3-yearly review as customer demand changes.

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

Q18 comments:

Targeted specification makes sense – combined with the twin-focus franchise.

Specified requirements should include bringing in frequent commuter services for stations between Aberdeen and Perth to supplement the fast services between Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow / Edinburgh. Currently the stations between Abroath and Dundee, together with Invergowrie, are a severely under-used resource. This makes no sense

to visitors from overseas, or even from Glasgow (and certainly not to people living close to the stations). Tactran has carried out detailed work on developing local and regional rail services through the Tay Estuary Rail Study and this should be fed into the preparation of the Franchise requirements for 2014. Sufficient time (say, up to the mid-way point in a 12-year franchise) should be given to assess the success of such an initiative. The additional stops recently introduced at Broughty Ferry are only a small step in the right direction.

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

Q19 comments:

This might be on a case-by-case basis where the franchisee presented a project proposal outlining benefits and risks to Transport Scotland, with the potential to draw on an incentive fund to underwrite losses or provide rewards.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments:

Maybe international comparisons should play a part, but the provision of more affordable off peak fares, and savings for booking in advance, help to meet the social purposes of rail services. However, currently the fares system is extremely complicated, and it is hard to know how to get the best deal.

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:

No comment

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:

No comment

23. What should the difference be between peak and off-peak fares? Will this help encourage people to switch to travelling in the off-peak?

Q23 comments:

There should continue to be a difference which helps to encourage people to switch to off-peak, thereby helping to make the best use of capacity-
Edinburgh-Dundee-Aberdeen and Glasgow-Dundee-Aberdeen services seem quite well used throughout the day.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:

The reasons for under-use of some stations should be looked at, together with the economic, social and environmental consequences of closure.

If stations have not been properly utilised in living memory, as with the smaller stations either side of Dundee, then they should be considered as underutilised capacity and a potential opportunity to improve services, with significant medium-term social, economic and environmental benefits, rather than a means of cutting costs in the short term.

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:

No comment

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:

By providing suitable train services, by linking bus services with train times, and by looking for opportunities to incorporate features, services and activities in the station that are distinctive and relevant to the community. There may be ways to expand its function beyond purely a train station provided this does not get in the way of passengers getting to the train on time.

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

Q28 comments:

Most of all there should be **cheap platform tickets available once again**, at all stations with ticket barriers, for family and friends to see off and meet passengers, help with luggage, etc. There seems to be no good reason why these were withdrawn – they could be clearly marked “not valid for travel”, and only work in ticket barriers at the issuing station.

Secure cycle parking facilities should be provided at all stations to encourage people to cycle to the train, and from the train to their destination. This could be combined at some stations, e.g. in busy towns or in attractive tourist locations, with bike hire and servicing, as provided at some continental stations. This could be a revenue source for the station as well as encouraging more use of trains and reducing need for car parking. A hire charge for secure bike lockers could cover provision of lockers and insurance.

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, as under Q16, it is important to retain some through cross-border services to and from stations north of Edinburgh. The benefit is primarily to those who are elderly, infirm, with young children, or (as in most cases for these journeys) with heavy luggage. Apart from the inconvenience of changing trains and waiting on the platform, cross-border services provide a better quality of service for long journeys than do ScotRail services. And they have wi-fi access.

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:

Many of them already stop at Waverley or Glasgow, allowing opportunities for Scottish connections. It seems quite a good balance at present, giving passengers a range of options to meet their needs.

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:

Wi-fit and electronic points should be provided as standard, initially on the main inter-city services and gradually extended through the fleet.

Increased provision should be made for carriage of cycles and pushchairs/wheelchairs on all trains, by the increased use of flexible space with retractable racks and fold-down seats. **There should be a booking system using the internet/phones/ticket offices/ticket machines** so that cyclists can secure a space, and avoid turning up and not being able to take their bike on the train (but people should still be able to turn up on spec and take a bike space if one is available). This is very important given the Scottish Government's commitment to sustainable transport, increased use of cycles by 2020, reducing carbon emissions, promoting health and active travel, etc.

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:

Put it high on the list of priorities. Scotland is lagging behind – people expect these services now.

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 comment

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

Q35 comments:

Try introducing the mobile phone alert system suggested in response to Q 14. This would enable passengers discreetly to alert the ticket inspector to cases

of rowdiness with passengers running the risk of being put off the train at the next stop. However, banning alcohol on trains timed to coincide with major sporting events seems a sensible precaution.

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

Q36 comments:

Advertise the availability of realtime information via smartphones.

Ensure that ticket office staff, attendants at ticket gates, and on-board ticket inspectors are kept updated on timetable alterations and encouraged to be proactive in advising passengers.

Introduce a requirement that an announcement is made at stations and on trains if there is an unscheduled delay of more than 2 minutes, with updates at least every 5 minutes, explaining the reasons for the delay, what is being done about it, and how long the delay is expected to last. If possible, appropriate advice should also be provided for passengers with connections to make.

Additional comment

This response form is inadequate as it reflects a closed process – there is no provision for respondents to provide “other” comments under the different categories, which Transport Scotland hasn’t thought of. There could be lots of innovative ideas and important feedback which will be missed as a result.

One of our members raised concerns about the current assistance provided for disabled passengers. Whilst station staff do provide assistance for people getting on trains if required, there seems to be no regard given to the seat that has been reserved or the importance of finding a seat near to a toilet. There should be clearer guidance for staff to follow, based on consultation with groups representing the interests of disabled passengers.

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 are an essential part of the rail transport system given Scotland’s geography and need to be retained and improved.

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:

It should be within the main ScotRail franchise to avoid further disintegration of rail services and booking arrangements, with the successful franchisee responsible for achieving the right balance of daytime and overnight services based on customer feedback, but the successful franchisee could use a specialist subcontractor to deliver the service.

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:

It provides an excellent way of sleeping through a long journey and arriving in London (or back home) early with the whole day ahead to make the most of.

Aberdeen (via Dundee) should certainly continue as one of the service options. Currently the timings are pretty good.

The main problem with the existing compartments is that they are very cramped for luggage space, whether for a suitcase or a rucksack; also the mechanism for holding open the door is not clear; and it's cramped to have a wash (barely adequate for a smallish adult). However, investment in ensuite facilities seems hard to justify. Better and more spacious toilet/washing facilities at both ends of each carriage would make a big difference, maybe separating the washroom from the toilets. Some Japanese trains do this very well.

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:

The proposed three priority principles seem to be sensible, but it's not clear how the responsibility to promote biodiversity is included in them. It should be a positive step, not just reducing environmental impact.

Identification of objectives against each of the principles should provide the basis for identification of KPIs. "Reducing our environmental impact" needs to

be broken out into a range of possible impacts, just as “being carbon smart, and energy wise” should stimulate a range of opportunities.

A brainstorming and prioritisation session with organisations such as Friends of the Earth Scotland and Transform Scotland would help to achieve this.

There are both direct impacts and indirect impacts. Is this section just concerned with the direct impacts on the environment of ScotRail operations and infrastructure?

Thinking more systemically, there is mention of modal shift, and this should be a key objective, so that many of the other ideas covered in the consultation are linked in to this major outcome. If there is co-ordination with other public transport providers; if there is better provision for carriage of bikes and bike parking at stations; if there is an easy way for passengers to communicate problems; if there is better information on changes to services; if there is provision of wi-fi, mobile phone connectivity and electric sockets; if commuter services are provided in the Tay Estuary area; then there will be increased modal shift to rail resulting in reduced environmental impacts and carbon emission reductions at a Scottish level.

Andrew Llanwarne, Friends of the Earth Tayside, 20 February 2012