

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:

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

Q2 comments:

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

Q3 comments:

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

Q4 comments:

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

Q5 comments:

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

Q6 comments:

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

Q7 comments:

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

Q8 comments:

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 incentivised, provided that it is **good** performance and not bog standard performance or failure. This must include an allowance for performance rising naturally anyway and the effect of public sector investment. For example electric trains will raise performance as they are more reliable than dirty diesels. A franchisee should not be rewarded for this public sector investment.

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: Groups of services. A whole of Scotland one is easy to devise, but useless.

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

Q11 comments: You need to measure passenger experiences, not whether trains run on time. For example rude and aggressive staff mean a poor performance, even if every train runs on time. Measuring train times at the final stop means little if it has been late at every other stop.

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

Q12 comments: Recovery time should be finely judged and placed throughout the journey. An extra half minute or minute is not noticeable, waiting for several minutes for time is noticeable.

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:

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

Q14 comments:

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: The competition is mainly from cars. People don't stand in cars. If people are to be enticed out of their cars then a minimum of standing is necessary, preferably none. That does not mean a book ahead only scheme, people don't have to book road space, so some limited standing may happen.

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: Interchange stations are for the convenience of the railways, not passengers. The new service from Waverley to Helensburgh Central is a case in point. I use it in preference to having to change, now including struggling through two sets of ticket gates at Glasgow Queen Street. I did that for years and am glad I no longer do it. Extend these services to Dunbar/North Berwick please. Trains stopping in the centre of cities are not as good as trains running through cities and dropping off/picking up at several stations.

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: When someone takes on a McDonald's franchise they do not specify what goes into the burgers. McDonald's specify that very precisely indeed. You have done the best thing in railway franchising by coming up with a franchisor's livery, instead of each franchisee painting the trains in their own livery. Don't mess up this great step forward by letting this week's company play around with services to suit them. They will have people standing for hours to minimise the number of trains they hire.

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

Q18 comments: The same level as other franchisors do, very tight. If there is to be franchising, which is unnecessary but that is another discussion, then the contract should not be as soft as has been usual in British railways ones. You should be as tight as commercial franchisors are.

Don't listen to the special pleading of franchisees. If they threaten to take away their ball then shrug your shoulders and let them. Directly operated rail services are doing very well and should be expanded until the moneygoround is driven out of the railways. It is madness that the railways are costing five times as much as BR did. Times are tough financially, let's cut out the gravy train for lawyers, shareholders and banks, which is where the extra money is going.

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

Q19 comments: Franchises should be doing what they are told. They are contractors. If they can find a better way of doing something then they take that back to the franchisor and make a suggestion.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: To get people off the roads, in order to meet our legally binding carbon reduction targets (you do remember those don't you, it used to be boasted that they were the toughest in Europe). Get rid of the lawyers, shareholders and banks and fares could be reduced dramatically, with no effect on taxpayer funding.

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: McDonald's specify prices I believe. A good example to follow if you want to see what works with franchising (their initial expansion, largely in England, was directly owned "restaurants"), then they went to franchising.

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: Is taxpayer's money spent on roads called a subsidy? Consider all those rural roads which are maintained at great expense, but produce no direct income for the taxpayer. Do you call that a subsidy?

We are not going to get people out of their cars by increasing fares which are already too high and higher than those in most parts of the rest of Europe. It is unlikely we are right and nearly all the others are wrong. Cut out the waste, lawyers, shareholders and banks and we stand a chance of moving fares in the right direction, which is downwards.

Successive governments have wimped out of getting motorists to pay their true costs, we now need to reduce the price of alternatives if we are to meet the binding emission reduction targets.

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:

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:

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:

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:

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

Q27 comments:

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

Q28 comments: I am only going to speak about bikes here.

One glaring omission is the lack of proper cycle parking at many stations. It should be a contract condition that all wheel benders are identified and removed by the franchisee and replaced with Sheffield Stands, within a year of the franchise starting. This should be in addition to expanding bike parking where necessary. Bike parking is often tucked in where car parking is not possible. Bike parking should be big, bold and in people's faces rather than tucked away.

In some stations more parking will be desirable. That may include lockers and, at a few stations in city centres, proper bike hubs with maintenance staff on hand.

Securocrats and anti-cycling railway staff should not be permitted to indulge their petty prejudices because they think cyclists are an easy group to pick on. At Waverley station you can drive a bomb hidden in a car or in a motorcycle (side or top) box into the station and park it without these boids worrying. Leave a similar box or a bag on a parked bike and the securocrats and anti-

cycling railway staff will have hot flushes. Of course if someone put a bomb in a bike bag and then put the bag in a car (with or without the bike), or in a motorbike box, the securocrats and anti-cycling rail staff would not panic, at least not until the bomb blew up. Cyclists are not asking for special treatment, only not to be singled out for discrimination.

Access to stations should also be improved with proper facilities on roads (which in many cases does not mean a special lane but simply designing the road properly) and, though not as an alternative to the roads, bike paths in some places. Anti-cycling railway staff should not be allowed to impose their own "rules" on cycling to stations on a whim. I can think of places where anti-cycling staff object to bikes, but do not object to big vans being driven the same way (vans bringing salt in winter for example which would otherwise have to be carried further, if it is safe enough for a big van to be driven somewhere then it is more than safe enough for bikes to be ridden in the same place).

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. See Q 16.

Now it may be that more flexible trains would be desirable for the services that do. To take an easy example if existing trains were fitted with small cabs in the middle then these could be split at Waverley and serve two destinations, joining back at Waverley. Sexy front ends are not necessary on these small cab ends. For the best part of two decades London trains split at Bournemouth Central, with only part of the train running to and from Weymouth. It was a slick operation, taking a few minutes only. If the English could do that with 1960s engineering then the Scots can certainly do that with 21st century engineering. All that is needed is the will.

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: There would be no benefits, only disbenefits. As well as passengers having to lug their luggage around an increasingly disjointed station (many useful routes were blocked by the stupid ticket gate scheme), prime city centre land is not the place for trains to sit idle when they could be on the move earning money.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments:

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. Adequate numbers of **working** toilets. Adequate space to store luggage, including bikes. On longer runs, refreshments.

Flexible space, including adequate bike space (the recent EGIP work was lax on this and when I asked questions the promised response to my questions was not forthcoming). Any train should now have at least two bike spaces per coach, arranged in flexible space so that it is also available for passengers with prams and walking aids. Trains are not just for commuters. The disabled lobby should not be allowed to exclude others from flexible space, or demand excessive space to manoeuvre some very large wheelchairs. Their attempts to pull at heartstrings should be resisted.

Flexible space must also be treated appropriately by staff and passengers. It can be done, many children have played happily by bikes in the flexible space on 170 trains without anyone fussing. I was once travelling on an X-2000 train in Sweden. The flexible space in the coach I was in was mostly taken up by prams and other luggage, but when someone in a wheelchair got on we made space for her. When someone wanted to go to the toilet the prams and other luggage was moved as necessary, which was quite a lot when the person in the wheelchair wanted to use the toilet. In Scotland the guard would have taken one look at the space and started foaming at the mouth while muttering about elf 'n safety, before stopping the train at the next station and jumping up and down until things were removed, starting with the bikes. In Sweden the guard looked at it, had a polite chat with people in the vicinity (in Swedish (which can be understood by Danish and Norwegian speakers), German and English) and made no more of it. Nobody died or was injured, despite a journey of several hundred kilometres. As it happens the train ran into Denmark, but by the flexible space was less full by then. All it takes is grown up passengers and staff.

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: If the objective is to get people out of their cars then electrical sockets and free wi-fi must be standard equipment. The railways have high

capacity telecom cables running alongside them, they have two rails and some have an overhead line. Information can be transmitted on all three of these, as well as by radio/satellite.

Communication capacity means operators have more information on where trains are and what is happening to them (allowing them to be maintained better and services to be varied as loads vary). It is likely that providing wi-fi capability to passengers is a negligible cost on top of this.

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: Longer trains.

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

Q35 comments:

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

Q36 comments: Make sure it is kept up to date. The current system can have huge differences between what the system says just before leaving one's house/work and what is happening when one gets to the station.

With high capacity communications there could be screens on trains at which passengers can look for delays, re-plan their trip if necessary, book tickets, make seat reservations and even browse for accommodation. As long as these screens are not blaring out adverts they are fine. Silent adverts are fine.

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. Encouraging more use of more sleeper services is a vital part in cutting carbon emissions. Sleepers should run down the East Coast and from Scotland to SW England, as well as the ones to Euston.

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: Option, with people who don't want the Scotrail franchise but

just the sleeper operation considered alongside tenderers for Scotrail and the sleepers.

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:I like being able to have an evening at home, get a train and wake up in London in time to get to a meeting in a state ready to do business.

Far better than waking up at an ungodly hour, dashing to the airport, hanging around there for ages, being prodded and poked (and probably irradiated in a striptease machine) by "security" boids, herded into a cattle truck and arriving in London more dead than alive.

The latest twist on air harassment is police officers demanding all sorts of personal information from people travelling within the UK (Schedule 7, Terrorism Act 2000). This is claimed to be about finding "terrorists", but instead is used to harass anyone the officer feels like picking on, particularly those who might not agree with government policy.

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:You should use performance indicators aligned with the claimed polices of the Scottish Government. For example you claim to want to see increased cycling and walking. Both are good ways of getting to stations. Improving things for pedestrians and cyclists must be something a franchisee has their feet held to the fire over.