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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 franchise should lead to a more integrated approach.

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

Q2 comments: Needs to be long enough to offer reasonable scope for investment, with options to extend subject to performance.

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

Q3 comments: Not sure.

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

Q4 comments: No clear view.

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

Q5 comments: No view

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

Q6 comments: Have clear deliverables and key performance indicators, with strong monitoring and evaluation provisions.

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: Penalties and, ultimately, termination clauses.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Incentivise good performance, but ensure targets are stretching and that rewards don't come from simply meeting basic requirements.

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: Should be an overarching system that has common elements; but it should take account of different operating conditions/constraints.

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

Q11 comments: Greater attempts should be made to proactively seek passenger feedback, rather than just expecting passengers to register issues or complaints.

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

Q12 comments: Not sure that journey times and performance are mutually exclusive. On the whole, it's better that trains run on time and offer decent quality services (where applicable) than trying to shave a bit of time off journeys.

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: I would support this idea, and have it applied to all aspects of the stations and service delivery.

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

Q14 comments: Peer review by service providers from other countries in Europe.

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: I wasn't even aware there was a standing time limit! I think standing for 10 mins on a fairly standard commute e.g. Motherwell-Glasgow isn't unreasonable for a fit, able-bodied person. But where lots of people standing is the norm, then I think capacity has to be looked at. This is particularly the case for longer journeys.

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: I would generally support increasing services within reason, as this has benefits for a wide number of people, some of whom will not be interchanging. But there should remain a reasonable number of direct services between key hubs.

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: It should be demand-led to a large extent, but not completely. There has to be some provision of services for less busy routes that people rely on, particularly in rural areas.

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

Q18 comments: No view

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

Q19 comments: Invite bidders to demonstrate ideas for innovative approaches, including evidence of how they have demonstrated innovation previously, to what extent have they examined options from other operators/countries..

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Fares policy should be clear and straightforward – the

incredible range of fares for inter-city services is too complex and confusing.

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: We need a fares structure that enables franchisees to offer decent quality services and invest, so I favour a commercial basis to a large extent. But there should be some kind of overall regulation to ensure people are not being completely fleeced. In terms of geography, I think it's reasonable that people pay a bit more on the less busy routes/areas, but within reason. I think this should be subsidised to some extent by the fares paid on busier, more lucrative routes/areas.

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: Generally, I would limit annual increases to the rate of inflation, unless a compelling case has been made on the basis of particularly high levels of investment in services or infrastructure. From personal experience, I find the fares on the routes I use most often (Motherwell-Glasgow/Edinburgh) to be reasonable, but cross-border fares can be ridiculously expensive. Fares shouldn't routinely be increased when services remain at a particular level, or even deteriorate, so as to satisfy shareholders.

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: If you use the train to commute to work, you don't generally have the choice of switching to off-peak. And these are precisely the services where you are most likely to have to stand. I would rather see additional services/capacity available than cashing in on people who have to travel at peak times, and spread that cost across the whole fare regime.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: We should be opening rail stations rather than thinking about closing them. The Scottish Government has regularly voiced its commitment to environmentally sound/green policies – how does closing stations square with that? What are the savings to be made in closing an unmanned station e.g. Airbles in Motherwell, against the costs in environmental terms?

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: As long as there are some safeguards in place. What happens if a local business funds a station or service then decides after a couple of years that they can't/won't do it anymore? Does it go to the wall or will there be a contingency in place?

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 views

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

Q27 comments: No views

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

Q28 comments: Decent lighting, emergency contact points

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, rail is a convenient (and green) way to travel between Scotland and London – removing convenient rail services will require travellers to use less carbon friendly (and more expensive) means of transport, increasing carbon footprint and road congestion.

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, an Edinburgh Hub for cross-border services would be inconvenient to Glasgow/West of Scotland-based travellers – extending journeys and impacting negatively on both businesses and individual family life.

Retaining cross-border services to and through Glasgow is vital to the economic well-being of the West of Scotland.

Glasgow is a well established and effective travel Hub – why change this?

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: Decent and reasonably-priced food/drinks provision, depending on length of journeys; decent toilet 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: Should be high priority to encourage more business travellers from planes to trains.

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: Significant first-class capacity is fine to increase revenue, as long as it's not at the expense of limited, grubby, poorly served standard class.

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

Q35 comments: Alcohol bans should only be in place for high risk services e.g. where it's known that certain categories of football supporters will be using the trains. Otherwise, alcohol should be available to the 99.9% of passengers who would drink responsibly.

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

Q36 comments: Generally think it's fine as it is.

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:

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: The Sleeper service is a vital business link to London, it provides business travellers with 'invisible' travel time, reducing costs which would otherwise be incurred (e.g. overnight accommodation). It should be a requirement of the franchise holder to provide this 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: See question 38 re. the appeal and value of it. May be worth piloting options for other destinations to assess demand.

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: