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Consultation Questions

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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: For Scotrail's future it needs to consider timetabling of routes carefully and efficiently so that integration of routes and services (including buses and ferries) so that revenue is not compromised through wastage. Scotland's festivals and other social groupings such as football fixtures should be considered into reserve timetabling or rolling stock provisions. However I think that Scotrail must continue to assess the social impact of not having a service running up the West Highland line and how that can effect locals (perhaps better rivalry against coach operators such as Citylink should be consulted), if these are not the current merits of using Scotrail then this needs to be established.

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

Q2 comments: At the moment I think that the Scotrail franchise should be allowed to hold the contract until deemed that their management aims do not suit the future investment and upkeep of the railways in Scotland, but frankly why get rid of the franchise which is seeing passenger footfall levels increase?

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

Q3 comments: In light of projects such as Edinburgh Trams becoming so financially unstable, accurate and constant consultation with contractors needs to be established, prior to this plenty of data should be collected on the benefits created by opening new lines/stations/routes, again if done thoroughly should provide an accurate enough risk assessment of projects.

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

Q4 comments: Rail systems in the UK are, frankly, vastly underfunded for the congestion levels on the rails. Profits should be assessed when yearly profit/loss is calculated, to which business strategists should consult with project leaders as to what plans should go ahead, perhaps with a mix of near immediate turn around to profit and some longer term investment schemes which pay back effectively over their installation.

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

Q5 comments: If it helps, consultation bodies to public opinion may be an option. This should not however give the right for vast amounts of project funding to go on public consultation that proves nothing, however as many can see in light of the Trams project in Edinburgh, the consultation of public can prove greatly important to route planning or potential scheme usage numbers.

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

Q6 comments: Again the general public could have a great sway on the success of a project or proposal brought forward by the franchise, however management within Scotrail or indeed any other Franchise should have encouragement by the Scottish government for plans to make any form of improvement, after all for the SNP to consider greener credentials for the future, it must surely consider its investment in rail infrastructure.

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

Q7 comments: Performance bonds would be a great incentive to the company, a level to which the local and national government can debate on. Granted this may delay the process in which projects and schemes are completed, however once consulted and passed should cement development in the Franchise. Again for governments to become greener, improving rail infrastructure and upping ridership is a successful proposition.

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

Q8 comments: Any failure to commit to should result in trade sanctions or fines. No publicity, just meetings to review and enforce or direct for improvement.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Always incentivise for good performance, less likelihood of fallout between franchise and government.

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: In order to keep all routes to a top standard, routes or service areas should be considered, i.e. North Highlands lines, Glasgow Suburban lines, etc.

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

Q11 comments: Speak to the passengers, if they say they're happy with what they have then incentivised the franchise to improve in other areas or from suggested improvements.

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

Q12 comments: Punctuality should be a principle which we in the UK should admire, yet by comparison to Japan or Switzerland and Germany, we have a somewhat lackadaisical approach to Trains being on-time, which means people are cautious of making journeys with connections in case they miss them for being late. For greater levels of integration and increased levels of efficiency (cost saving, etc) this should be considered.

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: If the Franchise is found not to be the problem then Network Rail should be made to see to it instead of depriving more funding from operators who are trying to run good services.

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

Q14 comments: Simple things like facilities (Electronic displays, Toilets, Automated Ticket machines, etc). I stood at a German Station that was nothing more than an Automated Ticket Machine, a Clock, Some Lights and a Platform and I still considered it an immaculate quality station. If people are not intimidated and find the Rolling Stock and Stations in good condition it can say a lot, not just in public opinion but in footfall levels. Have people actually said how they feel at a station, the response you should look for is comfortable.

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: Commuter trains at peak times, I would say 15 minutes.

Speaking as an East Coast Mainline Passenger who has been stood for 50 minutes on a train over 60 miles I can empathise with anyone who's stood on a train. However considering the capacity of most stations is a minimum of 6 cars and for most of the time these are 3 car trains, yes I think capacity should be upped. If 6 car commuter trains are full, maybe it is time to consider increasing to 9 cars through development of stations.

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: Manage routes accordingly, for instance I find it ridiculous that one train can go from Waverly to Helensburgh Upper. Consider not running between Queen Street and Waverly and having connections to other Glasgow Suburban services. Clearly establish long distance, faster routes from your "shorter" commuter services.

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: Frequency should only be determined when ridership levels are calculated to work out which rolling stock or how many units should be used at what time. One thing that must be regulated in ticketing, which is frankly farcical as to Peak and Off Peak. Again in foreign countries councils and local transport authorities set up fixed pricing for the whole area, in some instances it's the same rate of travel in an area the size of Scotland. A model to consider?

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

Q18 comments: Any franchise should be aware of government interests and be willing to take them on in consultation or by walking away, this way you will pick a franchise group as driven as the Scottish government to see results come out of this.

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

Q19 comments: If they can get more people using trains over cars or other forms of independent transport then financial breaks should be permitted, how big or where these breaks are established is entirely down to the government.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Standard system across areas so as to promote a ticketing system as simple as or more simple than that of buses. This could potentially see the further integration of Plusbus routes etc.

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: I think in areas such as Strathclyde where stations are so closely clustered it should be treated more like a metro style of ticketing, whilst any routes which follow an intercity style (or operate as an express) should be charged different rates accordingly, however not by vast amounts, no more than two or three pounds.

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: fare increases are never popular so where possible keeping this to a minimum or planning around this will keep passenger levels high, which will obviously contribute more than higher pricing over fewer customers. Especially in the current economic climate it would be wise to ensure most schemes are accounted for, elaborating on what comes out of whose pocket, either way people want to know that both the fares and taxes they pay will be a successful contribution to enhancing Scotland's Rail network.

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: I've never seen the point in this as it just confuses passengers, if we are to have peak train hours then make them known throughout Scotland as fixed times, then if needs be exclude routes or services which do not need to use the peak ticketing (rural or quieter lines). The difference should not be vast, yes decreasing congestion at peak times will be helpful by alternating the price, but like I have said before the difference should be no more than a couple of pounds in fare difference. It would surely be more beneficial using more units or a higher frequency per service during the rush hour period than pricing rail users out of it.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: In my opinion no station in Scotland should have to be closed, unless a convenient alternative is arranged. Consider the service that runs through the station if it is not suitable (for instance being a short hop station on an intercity route) than re-management of the service should be considered perhaps alternating between express and local 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: This could greatly benefit the franchise being able to divert more funding into projects and allowing a trusted third party to upkeep the stations, a strategy I feel could be best implemented in the Ex SPT network area.

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: If you have more than one organisation controlling numerous groups of stations then more time and effort would have to be spent in legislating the companies to do what government and the rail franchise wants. Streamlining this and having a one-to-one relationship with the Rail franchise would surely enable things to move faster and more efficiently with both sides more likely to come to agreements on maintenance and management of stations

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

Q27 comments: Promotional offers and knowledge. If locals know of their nearest station and where they can get to then that would be the first in helping communities use (and thus support) their local station. Promotions could be implemented across much of the central belt, for example in Edinburgh, marketing the train as cheaper and faster than buses, or advertising lower fares due to Green Tax, etc.

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

Q28 comments: My opinion is providing the bare minimum to everywhere but don't leave massive gaps between provisions. In the more remote communities why not have it so you can buy train tickets at local post offices

etc, again from my suggestion of making rail travel as easy as or easier than bus travel. Automated ticket machines should now be available across most of the network as well as simple electronic display boards with service updates, etc. Larger shelter space should also be considered (not necessarily heated but more substantial than a plastic box, where the above mentioned could be kept.

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: If Cross Border services do in fact terminate at Edinburgh, then Scotrail will have to consider express trains and local trains, not to mention the integration times that will have to follow in order for people from Inverness or Aberdeen to get to London. I think seen as how it has always worked before now, why get rid of it over a bit of politics, in times gone by the LMS and LNER had to share routes in Scotland, so why can't we now?

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: The only benefits to this I could see would be in having a faster service south, but even then, with HS2 looking like a typical English affair, I think it's pointless. The rail links south are not fast enough to justify the need to turn Edinburgh into a hub, so I maintain what I said above, keep the cross border routes.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Where possible keep to the maintenance plans in place; however I do feel for some units, regardless of the price, scrap them and buy new units. I feel more of the network needs to be electrified and so would put a greater emphasis on electric rolling stock. Consider the German state rail suburban train BR423, clean efficient, immaculate, ideal usage Central belt and Glasgow Suburbs.

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

Q32 comments: At least one toilet per train, no one wants to have to jump off a train in order to use a station lavatory and waste a tickets fare. Nearly all services now are equipped with routes announcers, which are fantastic, no further spending required. Perhaps ensuring cyclists can use the trains with ease is a good strategy to implement for sustainable networks.

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: With the expansion of 3 and 4G services to iPhone and Android users, I don't feel that Wi-Fi usage on board is essential, my advice would be keep that confined to station premises, where business people who are sat around can work away before getting on the Train. One thing a train should not do is block phone signal, it is dangerous and a large inconvenience to passengers, which in the modern age should be eradicated.

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: Express routes need a first class car, as for more localised routes, I don't feel it's a priority. The one thing the franchise in charge needs to do is prove there is a difference in paying the fare, perhaps complementary snacks, more leg room or seclusion are some possible ideas.

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

Q35 comments: During match day or concerts I think this may only fuel aggression and increase vandalism, by allowing alcohol to be consumed onboard. I personally don't have any problem with someone having a drink on

a train, but I can understand that some may find it unsightly or intimidating, to which I'd say consult the people and if the masses say they want it banned, then ban it.

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

Q36 comments: Announcing which side to exit the train could better help passengers in disembarking. Ensuring most stations have electronic display boards with up to date information and clear information about ticket times and difference in fare.

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: I think many Scottish business's and Scotland's economy could greatly suffer at the axing of this service, advertise connections with the Eurostar and many will be interested, especially from abroad where sleeper services are common.

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: That is in the interest of the Franchise in question, if they feel a better service would be provided by passing it on to another franchise then this could benefit, but in that east coast is state owned (thus likely having little interest) I'd say the contract could only go between First (currently operating Scotrail) or Virgin, seen as how they both use the WCML (West Coast Main Line) and thus have the drivers ready to drive that route.

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 should be appealing to business people, marketed as "not a day lost" in travel, a saving on hotel fares as it were, etc.

The sleeper should have comfortable berths with climate control to get the room to ideal temperatures. Here is where Wi-Fi may also benefit business people alike. First class could offer Freeview TV? I think that sleepers should be available at convenient times, for instance I think the Lowland Sleeper car's could available earlier, which could encourage more families to use the service.

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: In my opinion I think whoever gets the contract should be interested in lowering Carbon emissions from rail use; this could include the use of Bio-Diesel for most of the Sprinter and Turbostar rolling stock. Advertising where Electric trains get their electricity from, if it's not green, change it. Regenerative braking systems, etc, could all help make the network more environmentally friendly and of course the more passengers you attract the better the service (more passengers per gallon). These kind of stipulations should be really considered in the Franchise agreement, if Scotland wants to consider it Green future.