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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:

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

Q2 comments: Sufficiently long to ensure adequate investment.

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: Share to be set on the low side with additional portion dependent on achieving a series of targets.

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

Q5 comments: Only if essential.

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

Q6 comments: Look to best practise throughout the world – it's all been done successfully before!

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: Set a series of financial penalties.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Both.

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: Route by route.

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

Q11 comments: Have passengers represented at an early stage.

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

Q12 comments:

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: Can only be applied where there is direct control.

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

Q14 comments: Regular, independent passenger feedback.

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 target should be no standing at all.

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: Agree that additional interchange stations would help but only if these were to be provided with adequate facilities – toilets, catering, comfortable lounges, etc.) – and sensible onward connections. The challenge would be to knock some heads together to get interlocking timetables with, primarily, other train and bus services. Also to provide large and reasonably priced car parking facilities.

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: There has to be a Government hand to ensure passenger needs are satisfied.

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

Q18 comments:

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

Q19 comments:

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Whatever is settled it must reflect value for money when compared with other forms of travel and that will usually be the private motor vehicle.

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: If one of the principal aims of Government is to encourage train travel then it must ensure fares are attractive to potential customers.

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: Depends on how much the Government wants to reduce road traffic.

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: Off-peak fares should be set at a level that will even out travel demand. One assumes the overall cost difference between running a full train and one with 35% capacity is not huge so by offering carefully tailored fares more reasonable filled trains can be run with a corresponding reduction in crowded ones so, perhaps, reducing the overall frequency of service. Less trains less pollution.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Stations (and new rail lines) need to be built near to locations of potential passengers. Where stations are close together, in an urban situation, it does not make sense to close any of them. Has anyone considered 'on request' rural stations where uptake may be low?

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: Excellent idea but anything proposed must integrate with existing services and, if a station, train operators must be prepared to make use of it.

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: It would make sense for stations to be the responsibility of a franchisee so management of train and stations staff come under one structure.

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

Q27 comments: Give local communities a role in management with an assurance that their ideas/suggestions will not be ignored.

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

Q28 comments: The categories noted in the consultation document seem reasonable but a plea for decent toilets at all stations as all train toilets are not always available. This particular aspect gets very frustrating and uncomfortable for the older members of the travelling public!

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: From a passenger point of view, on a long journey it is not

convenient to break to change trains as one often settles down to get some work done. On shorter journeys that's not so much of an issue. On, for example, the Kings Cross to Aberdeen route could the train not split at Waverley? The ticketing system will be able to provide adequate information for sharing the revenue/cost.

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. The cross-border routes should continue. While Waverley is currently in turmoil (with no customer vision of the overall completion picture) there are insufficient decent waiting areas for passengers in transit and it's just not conducive to train changing.

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: All trains must have working toilets. Commuter routes aside, all trains should have catering 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: To tempt the business community from their cars it is essential to provide a high quality, high capacity Wi-Fi system so the train effectively becomes their office (it often does at present but there are trains with no Wi-Fi and some where it's only available intermittently). The same argument can be applied to mobile 'phones although the various networks seem to operate well.

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: It's probably the availability of 'first class' with more generous accommodation that attracts the business community who can be sure of a certain amount of privacy. Longer trains (with perhaps subsequent longer platforms) will add capacity so franchisees ought to have the flexibility to judge the market.

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: The information boards at most stations are good – if a bit sparse in number in some places – and the web sites with current details are also good but they should be available at stations too. In general, the 'tannoy' systems throughout the network need to be improved so messages are heard

at all points of stations and are clearly understood.

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: A sleeper service should be retained.

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:

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: Frequency is probably about right and a service continuing to Oban may well be popular. High quality facilities – so one could arrive at one's destination ready to begin work – are essential.

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: Zero Waste Scotland has an excellent list of items that could be translated into good KPIs so there's really not much point in re-inventing the wheel!