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Consultation Questions

[Questions 37 – 39 only answered]

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:

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:

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

Q11 comments:

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:

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:

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:

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:

18. What level of contract specification should we use the 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:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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 Scotland's transport service and a large portion of the benefits accrue to the people, economy and environment of Scotland, and not just to the TOC. Therefore the matter cannot be left to TOCs to decide.

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 would be worth letting the sleeper as a separate franchise on an experimental basis for say 5 years with the provision that, if it is not successful as a standalone franchise, it could be re-absorbed into the main Scotrail franchise.

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 main appeal of the sleeper is that it provides effectively 'instant' travel between Scotland and England. That is, by sleeping for the journey, it is not necessary to expend any of one's useful (work or leisure) time on travelling. Additional late/early trains may complement the sleeper but will never replace it.

The Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen services represent the highest value because most of the stations served have the highest journey times to London by other modes. Between the three portions, a huge range of stations are served which would otherwise have no realistic service to England. Fort William in particular would die economically if the sleeper were withdrawn. It should also be realised that many economic decisions outside the railway have been based on the current service pattern – for example people have bought homes, and businesses have established premises, based on the current set of destinations. It would be disastrous for people who have bought property in one location based on the current sleeper service, if the service were relocated to a different destination! It would be better to keep the current service pattern but offer better connecting services to other destinations.

Sleeper facilities are mostly adequate as they stand. Refurbishment would be welcome, as would small improvements such as better heat/ventilation, in-cabin power points, wi-fi, fixing rattles, improved sound-proofing etc. However, there is little point attempting to provide major upgrades such as en-suite facilities or on-board showers, because showers are normally available at journey's start/end. En-suite toilets would be a very inefficient use of space

because they would likely only be used once or twice per journey, while using valuable space for the whole journey. If people are concerned about sharing toilets, it would be better to make small improvements such as disposable toilet seat covers, sanitary gel, more frequent attention by cleaning staff during the journey etc.

The biggest problems facing the sleeper right now are lack of publicity and ease of booking. Specific issues are:

- Not all rail booking web sites allow sleeper bookings and – even where it is provided - it is made complicated and not promoted. For example, if one attempts to book via East Coast Trains' web site, one will find the sleeper shown as 'greyed out', which is exactly the same as trains with no availability. In reality, the sleeper may well be available but cannot be bought via this site. Those 'in the know' can use the Scotrail site but new or casual users will never know. Even on the Scotrail site, where no bargain berths are available, it shows the message 'all services on this route are fully booked', which is often totally untrue – services are available just not bargain berths. Similarly the process of booking supplements is very complex, especially if for example one wishes to travel by sleeper one way and by day train the other.
- Rail staff outside of Scotland are unaware of the sleeper and do not promote it. For example, booking recently at a major station (Birmingham New Street), I had to guide the booking clerk through the sleeper booking process! As a regular traveller, I was able to do this successfully but new/casual users would effectively be turned away. A related point is that the sleepers should serve more stations in England – for example a stop in the West Midlands with connecting services to the East Midlands, South West England and Wales.
- It is not possible to book meals in advance. This makes it impossible to get reliable catering since after boarding one may find the lounge full all evening, or having run out of certain dishes. I assume that the converse also frequently occurs (food may be stocked on the train but is thrown away if not used). The answer is simple: at the time of booking (or up to the day before travel) it should be possible to reserve a table in the lounge car for a certain time period (e.g. 45 minutes) and make a specific meal choice so that the train can be stocked accordingly.

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:

