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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 I agree with the proposal of a dual focus franchise. Subsidised services would be covered by the social rail element.

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

Q2 Somewhere in excess of 20 years. If a dual focus franchise is adopted and a private company is to fully exploit the economic element of this, then they will need a long period to recoup investment that they would be reluctant to make on a short period franchise as there would be insufficient time to recoup this investment. The sums involved in rail investment are massive and no private organisation would be willing to invest large sums that they would never recover on a short period franchise.

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

Q3 no comment to make

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

Q4 If a certain percentage above that expected at issue of the franchise for the economic element is exceeded then an agreed percentage should be used to reduce the subsidy of the social element of the franchise. If revenue exceeds the expectations in the social element then 100% of that should be used to reduce the subsidy. Social services that become economic may have an option to move to the economic element of the franchise.

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

Q5 Additional party involvement usually results in higher costs of providing services. Unless their input is free or offers benefit in excess of cost then input should be avoided.

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

Q6 comments: Profit share generated by developing and growing market share of the economic element.

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

Q7 no comment to make

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

Q8 financial penalty.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 No incentive. If the Company needs an incentive to perform well then they are not fit to have the franchise. Good performance should be a condition of award. There should be penalties for poor performance.

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 probably route based, punctuality is less important for example on Inverness to Kyle than it is on Edinburgh to Glasgow.

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

Q11 no comment to make

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

Q12 Journey times should be as short as possible, but recovery time should be built in to allow connections to be made.

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 No, no incentives should be paid. They are not entitled to bonus. Service

quality is a condition of franchise award, it is the norm and should not need incentives. The best incentive is the knowledge that a penalty will apply if they do not perform.

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

Q14 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 Standing should not be increased. There should be no standing, customers are paying high fares. Annual fares increases are considerable. It is therefore unacceptable to have standing. If you plan to increase standing time then a fares reduction policy should be implemented.

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 Definitely not. Removing direct services in favour of interchanges is a step backwards. I quote (your own policy) "Focus investment on making connections across, within and to/ from Scotland better, improving reliability and journey times, seeking to maximise the opportunities for employment, business, leisure and tourism" To make further use of interchange stations would contradict your own policy. Arriving in an interchange station on a cold wet winter night to wait in the freezing cold for a connecting train is not better than a direct service. Such a policy would result in less journeys by rail, for example I would choose to drive from Montrose to Edinburgh or Glasgow if a direct service was no longer available

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 The franchisee should be able to tailor services to customer demand, but they should not be permitted to use this to axe services for operational convenience. Past history of train operators is that they prefer to operate the railway for operational convenience rather than passenger convenience.

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

Q18 no comment to make

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

Q19 By having an economic element of the franchise. Their share of the profits would encourage them to be innovative.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 To provide the customer with value for money and minimise fare increases

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 Depends on the franchise model adopted. If on current basis then all fares should be regulated.

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 Network enhancements should not result in higher fares. Subsidy should be reduced by cross funding from services that operate at a profit. That profit should not be devoured by the franchisee. Cost cutting would result in subsidy reduction, such as buying rolling stock direct and allowing its use on the franchise. This would take stock leasing company excessive charges out of the equation. There seems to be an issue with station costs that needs to be reviewed.

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 Status quo would suffice

Scottish stations

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

Q24 You should determine the reason why certain stations have low numbers.

For example : Broughty Ferry, Balmossie, Monifieth, Barry Links, Golf Street. The answer to these is easy, there are hardly any trains stopping, therefore there are few passengers. You cannot reduce the service so that passengers cannot use the trains, then use low numbers as an excuse for closure. That is unfair and unethical. There may be an opportunity (using this example) to amalgamate stations such as closing Golf Street as Carnoustie is very near. Close Barry links, low population with Monifieth & Carnoustie nearby. Close Balmossie as monifieth is near. Far more services would have to call at the remaining stations, Carnoustie, Monifieth, Broughty Ferry. There are other areas in Scotland that this model would apply to.

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 Third party funding should be welcomed, but any involvement must ensure that safe operation of the Railway is maintained. It should also not result in any additional cost.

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 Network rail should retain stations, but they should not be permitted to charge vast sums for the use of stations that are socially necessary .

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

Q27 Involve local community Councils. These organisations are needing a sense of purpose and in some areas the local station may provide this.

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

Q28 I have no view

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 Prior to this consultation document I would have suggested Scottish Ministers. My view has now changed as I do not think that Scottish Ministers can be trusted with these services. English Government has retained these services throughout the darkest days of the Beeching era and rationalisation of the 1980s and there is no reason to suggest they will not continue to do so. These services should remain as part of the East Coast & Cross Country franchise and must be retained as they ensure that the North of Scotland has good connections with the rest of the UK. Scottish ministers have concentrated transport investment in the central belt and show little interest in anything North. This document enforces this view. Scottish ministers should therefore not interfere with cross border services North of Edinburgh other than Sleeper services.

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 There would be no benefit from terminating cross border services other than operational benefits for rail operators. Rail services are operated for customer benefit, not for operating convenience. Scottish ministers will no doubt fight to have HS2 extended to Scotland. They would not accept it terminating in England at an interchange hub for inferior services to Scotland. We in the North of Scotland would equally find our cross border services terminating at an Edinburgh interchange hub for an inferior service forward totally unacceptable. Other proposals in the document that propose interchange hubs within Scotland would possibly result in forwarding services not being direct. If this was the case then road and air transport for such journeys would be preferable.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 Government should purchase the rolling stock and supply it for use with the franchise. This would avoid the high charges from the rolling stock leasing companies. Reduction in operating costs would help reduce subsidy.

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

Q32 working toilets, a seat for everyone and adequate luggage storage, especially on tourist routes for hikers equipment and cycles.

Passengers – information, security and services

33. How should we prioritise investment for mobile phone provision and / or Wi-Fi type high-bandwidth services?

Q33 provision of this should be included in the franchise specification. How it is delivered and the cost is therefore responsibility of the franchisee.

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 End provision of first class, but segregate business travellers from families with children on a similar basis to other operators “quiet coach”

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

Q35 No evidence required, alcohol consumption on trains is not a necessity. Ban it immediately, but exempt the Caledonian Sleeper and private charters etc.

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

Q36 Better online information, better quality announcements and more boards at stations. Online timetables and fares information are not fit for purpose.

Caledonian Sleeper

37. Should we continue to specify sleeper services, or should this be a purely commercial matter for a train operating company?

Q37: An operator should be found to operate it commercially. It is not a socially necessary service and should not be subsidised. It is a very useful and excellent service that allows full use of a day in the UK capital for both business and leisure purposes.

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 See response 37, it should not be part of the 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 The sleeper can be used for a day out or business meeting in or near London that cannot otherwise be done without 2 days travelling and overnight stays. It is far more valuable to Aberdeen and Inverness than Central belt route users as the additional high journey times from these remote locations to Edinburgh are much higher. The sleeper compartments are small and lack sufficient space to move, ensuite would be better but probably not possible to provide. The service should be operated on a commercial basis. The operating costs will dictate the ticket price.

Environmental issues

40. What environmental key performance indicators should we consider for inclusion in the franchise agreement or the High Level Output Specification?

Q40 no comment to make