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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: The rail system is already much fragmented and there should continue to be one franchise for Scotrail (with S of the Border services coming into Scotland eg East Coast, Cross-Country etc)

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

Q2 comments: As long as possible; short franchises encourage short term thinking

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

Q3 comments: A sensible level of guarantee both ways.

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

Q4 comments: Cost reduction sharing and/or profit sharing with Government.

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

Q5 comments: Add-on facilities or services on a stand-alone basis should not be discouraged

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

Q6 comments: See Q3 – make it cut both ways

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

Q7 comments: A meaningful but not punitive level – too many franchisees have been surrendering their franchises because of silly guarantees to

Government – no good to anyone

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

Q8 comments: Terminate in event of major failure to deliver

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: See Q3 response

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: Whole of Scotland – all parts of the country deserve a decent level of service

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

Q11 comments: Publish complaint numbers and severity

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

Q12 comments: There is a need for reasonable recovery times in schedules but these should not be so slack as to make timetables a nonsense.

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: Should cover all aspects of rail services in Scotland

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

Q14 comments: On train surveys would be useful

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: 10 minutes is a reasonable time but many services exceed this limit or are severely overcrowded – that will for sure discourage people from using rail.

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: It is a major discouragement to many people to have to change trains, especially those who are elderly, have children or much luggage. Direct services to and from London to eg Aberdeen, Inverness etc must be maintained; forcing a change at Edinburgh will discourage many users who will turn to air transport (which often is cheaper anyway). Interconnecting services, however, as in Germany can be useful in giving more frequent 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: Government should set a reasonable minimum level of service, which the provider can increase but not decrease. Don't micro-manage as DfT seems to do in England.

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

Q18 comments: Good minimum service with quality standards but with encouragement to add-on and provide better trains etc.

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

Q19 comments: Suggest some incentive on less well used routes especially.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Rail competes with the car, bus and in some cases (eg cross-Border) with air and has absolutely no monopoly. Fares have to be competitive and not punitive.

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: See Q20

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: See Q20 also. It is ridiculous to improve the network, which should encourage people to switch to rail, and then discourage them by setting higher fare levels.

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: Should have a clear and uniform policy as regards timing of off-peak travel eg after 0900 and not between say 1630 and 1800. Off-peak fares should be markedly lower than peak, but with very clear rules.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Population density should drive new stations or services; underused stations need to be publicised and given a proper period to recover – let us not do the BR 1960s trick of reducing services to almost nothing and then claiming that passengers are not using the service or station!! Engage local communities.

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: Good idea!

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 clear view on this.

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

Q27 comments: Some financial assistance by way of grant on a matched funding basis for rundown stations or for lightly used stations?

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

Q28 comments: Present systems seem adequate.

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: Absolutely yes. Connectivity across the UK is a key objective of any decent transport policy; as noted above rail is not in any kind of monopoly position and has got to be attractive. Taking a Class 170 DMU (at best) from Aberdeen or Inverness with inadequate luggage space and less than adequate legroom (if above about 5ft 6in) – and frequently overcrowded – then having to change in Edinburgh or Glasgow is NOT an attractive option – a long distance bus goes point to point and the luggage is stored away; ditto

plane. The DoT and Scottish Government can surely agree on this type of issue.

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, emphatically, and recent reduced Kings X services to and from Glasgow Central was a retrograde step. Edinburgh Waverley is already a Hub station, we don't need to make it one!

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Direct ownership by the operating company – the rake off by the ROSCOs is absurd.

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 clean toilets; catering on longer distance services.

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: No 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: Suggest a reasonable ratio of 1st/Std accommodation on longer distance services; Std only on shorter/suburban or rural lines.

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

Q35 comments: Most people value a quiet drink on a longer distance train; prohibit as now for major sporting events only.

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

Q36 comments: It is pretty good now.

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: See earlier comments re connectivity; recent increased usage should be encouraged; look again at eg Plymouth service.

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: Leave it with the Scotrail franchise; it has worked OK

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: Sleeper services are useful for early start/late finish in London or London area; or for leisure use. Last ordinary trains mean very early morning arrivals at destination – very unattractive option (though a 1900Kings X to Edinburgh 6 days would be useful all year round).

Outpost services are useful; maybe a connecting service to Oban?

Proposed upgrade including showers en suite welcomed; 1st class fares should reflect better facilities (as in Europe)

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: NOT running diesel trains under the wires where this is not necessary (eg Edinburgh/Glasgow to Birmingham); fuel efficiency; maximum use of electric traction.