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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: I can see no merit in a dual focus franchise. One of the greatest problems with the railway service at present is fragmentation of providers. If there were economic and social elements, it is likely that each would blame the other for poor connectivity and other problems. The economic element would moreover have no incentive to work for anything other than profit.

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

Q2 comments: The length of future franchises should be no longer than five years. First, because the political climate nationally may change and nothing should be done now which would make it more difficult to re-integrate the railways should that happen. Second, the argument that operators are more willing to invest if given longer franchises has been shown by experience to be false. Third, accountability is highest when franchises are relatively short.

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

Q3 comments: Private enterprise is about risking investment and securing returns if this is done successfully. There should therefore be no state support. Successful bidders should factor this into their offering, and should be obliged to honour their contract for the length of the franchise, whether or not it is profitable. Otherwise privatisation has little meaning.

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

Q4 comments: If it can be shown that revenue has risen because of investment or efforts by entities other than the franchisee (such as investment in new routes or stations by statutory bodies; or advertising and promotion of stations by local groups), then such revenue rises should be allocated primarily to those who made such investments or efforts.

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

Q5 comments: It would be desirable for third sector organizations and co-ops to be able to bid for franchises. However, the legal, financial and other costs involved in preparing a bid under current rules would be prohibitive for such groups. Consideration should be given to ways of ensuring that the system does not limit bidders solely to large established companies simply because they are the only groups that can afford the cost of bid preparation

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: The contract should be written in such a way that the Scottish Government can terminate it at short notice and without compensation if the main franchise commitments are not met over a period of time.

### **Achieving reliability, performance and service quality**

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

Q9 comments: Both, but incentives should be awarded only where performance substantially exceeds the standards set out in the franchise award.

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: There should be one system for the whole of Scotland, so that the system is transparent and easily comprehensible to railway users.

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

Q11 comments: By involving passengers more directly in the process of franchise management.

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

Q12 comments: There is no reason why both should not be improved together. 25 years ago, British Rail ran the Edinburgh-Glasgow service with end-to-end timings of 44 minutes, while using proper, locomotive-hauled trains. Journey times were better and performance was better. We need to return to those standards, and ensure the franchisee meets them

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: The Service Quality Incentive Regime is not known by or understood by more than a tiny fraction of passengers in Scotland, and is therefore not fit for purpose.

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

Q14 comments: Regular independent inspections of stations, trains, provision of catering services where advertised, and provision of operating toilet facilities should be made by the body awarding the franchise, to ensure that provision meets the standard agreed when the franchise is awarded.

### **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: Standing should not be part of the experience of travelling by train. Standing passengers are not getting proper value for their fares. They are also in a vulnerable position if the train has an accident, so standing needs to be eliminated on health and safety grounds.

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: No. Passengers want a direct journey wherever possible. Unless connectivity can be guaranteed at Swiss levels (and there is no sign of that) interchange stations will mean long, cold waits, and will be unpopular.

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: If left to the franchisee, service provision will be dictated by profitability, so this is inconsistent with the provision of a public service.

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

Q18 comments: Very detailed specification is needed to overcome the poor quality of service provided by the present franchisee within the current contract specification.

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

Q19 comments: Let's see if the franchisee can deliver services to an adequate standard in the first place, before thinking about ways of getting them to innovate!

### **Scottish rail fares**

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

Q20 comments: The rationale should be a fair and easily comprehensible system. The purpose should be to recompense operators for the service given when it is satisfactory while compensating passengers when it is not. Fares should therefore be related to distance travelled, with rebates directly and immediately to passengers in cases of poor performance. If fares were directly related to distance, many of the anomalies of the present system would disappear automatically. Compensation is also an important issue. At present, passengers delayed by 30 minutes or more can write to the operator and claim a partial refund, which can take some time to be given, and then is made only in vouchers. Since up-front payment is demanded before travelling, it is only fair that refunds should be given to passengers automatically on leaving the train when it is delayed. The franchise contract should insist on this.

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: Fares currently regulated by government should remain so, across the whole system. This is the ordinary traveller's only guarantee of protection from arbitrary profiteering.

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: Fares should not be increased by more than the current rate of inflation. Fares should be linked to the cost of operation, and to the capital invested by the operator. The operator should make public information about how additional revenue from fare rises has been invested. As recommended above, fares should be linked directly to distance travelled, so applying differential increases would be undesirable.

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: Most journeys are planned because of the necessity of departing or arriving at certain times. The number of journeys that can be displaced by pricing policy is probably low. At present, peak fares are simply a means used by operators to maximise their revenue. There is little or no evidence that they can influence choice of journey times. Peak hour trains remain very crowded, not because of pricing policy, but because people have to get to work by a certain hour. Working people are penalised for this, which seems unjust. Furthermore, the peak hours are unnecessarily complex, and should be simplified. While the tea-time peak is about 90 minutes long for most travellers, for passengers from Glasgow to Polmont and Linlithgow it stretches in effect from 16.20 until 18.45. Anomalies such as this must be eliminated by ensuring the peak is no longer than 100 minutes for any traveller. Finally, if peak fares are charged, peak-length trains should be provided. Some ScotRail trains operated during the peak are shortened towards the end of the peak without the fare being reduced. This is unacceptable.

## Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: The current network should be extended where opportunities exist, because it is greener, and the statistics show a growing preference for rail travel. Immediate opportunities include re-instating a direct passenger service along the line which already exists between Dunfermline and Alloa/Stirling, and between Edinburgh and Galashiels, with the aim of eventual re-instatement to Carlisle. New stations would be required along such lines. The existing network should not be reduced – where usage of a station is low, it is up to the operator to advertise and promote the service more effectively in the locality and among potential users where these are likely to be tourists.

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: Payments could be made to them on the basis of increased usage as a result of greater attractiveness of the station, or local advertising of services from it. In addition, third parties should be encouraged to market and sell train tickets at or for their local station, and be given a percentage of the revenue for this service.

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 will be easier for passengers to identify who is at fault when things go wrong if responsibility is entirely with one organization.

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

Q27 comments: Communities could be encouraged to support their local station by payments made to them on the basis of increased usage as a result of greater attractiveness of the station, or local advertising of services from it. In addition, communities should be encouraged to market and sell train tickets at or for their local station, and be given a percentage of the revenue for this service.

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

Q28 comments: A facility to check on the status of a train that has not arrived in good time should be available at every station.

## **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: Cross-border services should continue to go to Dundee, Aberdeen, and Inverness, both to avoid disruption for passengers and because the quality of trains used on these services provides a benchmark by which to measure the quality of inter-city services within Scotland. It would be reasonable for ScotRail to be absolved from the need to provide services on these routes at or around the times cross-border services run. DfT should specify these services in consultation with Scottish Ministers.

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. there would be no discernible benefit to passengers from having to disembark, haul luggage across a station, and (in all probability) wait for a different service in order to complete a journey which can be made without interruption at present. Through trains from London to Dundee and Aberdeen have run for well over 120 years. They should be continued, as should a through service from London to Inverness.

## Rolling stock

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

32. Q31 comments: The fees quoted as payable to the ROSCOs are absurdly high for the elderly and poor -quality trains provided by ScotRail. Given the age and quality of the trains used by ScotRail, the capital value cannot be very great. The rate of return on this value received by the ROSCOs is far beyond what could be obtained commercially for these trains in an open market. That produces unjustifiably high costs for the franchisee, which of course are passed on to the passenger. There needs to be a mechanism to bring open market pricing into lease costs for rolling stock. One method of doing this might be for the Scottish Government or the franchisee to specify and procure new trains, by-passing the ROSCOs entirely if doing so proves to be cost-effective.

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

Q32 comments: There should be very clear delineation between (a) trains used on commuter routes into conurbations and (b) inter-city and long-distance trains. At present ScotRail uses diesel multiple-units which are not fit for purpose on both these types of service. This is wholly unacceptable. Passengers on a train for two hours or more between say, Glasgow and Aberdeen, or Edinburgh and Inverness, need more space, more legroom and greater comfort than those on a 15 or 20 minute journey from a suburban station to a city centre. They also need trains on which it is possible to work if necessary. All inter-city and long-distance services in Scotland should therefore be provided by trains of the quality currently provided by East Coast, Virgin, or Cross-Country, rather than the cramped, noisy, inadequate, vibrating, and near-life-expired units currently used by ScotRail

## Passengers – information, security and services

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

Q33 comments: This should not be a high priority. On the contrary, many passengers would welcome provision by the franchisee of Quiet Coaches and areas where mobile phones can not be used.

35. 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: First-class services would not be necessary on ScotRail if standard class seating and space standards met those offered by, say, East



Coast. The answer is not to improve conditions for the few that can afford high fares, but to improve them for everyone.

Additional seating capacity could be provided to some extent if the franchisee's management could attempt to forecast demand. It is difficult to understand why (for instance) trains between Edinburgh and Glasgow on the last shopping Saturday before Christmas are the same length as on a wet Saturday in February. It suggests there is scope for more imaginative use of rolling stock.

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

Q35 comments: The problem is not simply one of the consumption of alcohol on trains. Disruption, when it occurs, is sometimes the result of passengers having been allowed to board when already substantially inebriated. Measures to restrict this should be considered.

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

38. Q36 comments: By ensuring, in the first place, that information systems already in place at stations and on trains are fully and correctly used. These are often inaccurate or misleading. Who hasn't been on an eastbound train slowing for a stop at Polmont only to be told by a screen and a disembodied voice that the next stop will be Glasgow Queen Street (or similar)? The problem is very much worse when there is disruption, and at weekends where no effective management appears to be in place.

### **Caledonian Sleeper**

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

Q37 comments: Experience shows that TOCs cannot be trusted to make decisions in the interests of passengers, so the services should continue to be specified.

40. 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: Both options should be considered.

41. 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 appeal consists of

- Time saved by travelling overnight
- City centre departure and arrival
- The ability to avoid airports and all their inconveniences.

Services to Aberdeen and Inverness are especially valuable because of the distances and travelling times involved.

Two-berth cabins are now archaic other than for couples travelling together, so should be reduced in favour of one-berth provision.

Pricing needs to be competitive with (though not necessarily the same as ) air travel.

### **Environmental issues**

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

Q40 comments: The best environmental benefit will be achieved simply by succeeding in getting more people to make journeys by train rather than by car.