

## Respondent Information Form and Questions

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

### 1. Name/Organisation

#### Organisation Name

London Friends of the West Highland Lines

Title Mr  Ms  Mrs  Miss  Dr  *Please tick as appropriate*

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### 3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

/

Group/Organisation

*Please tick as appropriate*

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

*Please tick as appropriate*  Yes

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis  
*Please tick ONE of the following boxes*

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

*Please tick as appropriate*  Yes  No

available, but not my address

- (d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?
- Please tick as appropriate*  Yes  No

## 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:

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: The regime should be aligned with routes or service.

The importance of punctuality, for example, depends very much on making connections. With the Highland services, connections are more often with buses and ferries than with other trains. Missed connections with other public transport should be penalised, rather than so many minutes late at the terminus. The penalty should be taxi provision.

On the Highland lines journey times can be lengthy, so facilities like toilets and trolley provision are often more of an issue than punctuality without reference to lost connections. Carriages, seating, refreshments and toilet facilities on the longer Highland journeys should be improved above that provided for short commuter routes

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: Where clockface timetables have been achieved, these should be retained.

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: The sleeper fares should be largely set on a commercial basis, subject to a government-imposed cap.

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: It is understandable that the ITT may be questioning the viability of three little-used West Highland Line stations at Beasdale, Locheilside and Falls of Cruachan.

There has been an explosion in the UK walking market in recent years, however, with large numbers of people looking for new walks, be they low level and coastal or inland and rough mountaineering routes.

This market is now year-round and includes mid-week breaks as well as weekends. Marketing efforts, including production of walking brochures and volunteer-guided walks, have brought a steady increase in the numbers of passengers using the Settle-Carlisle Railway, for example, which actually re-opened small wayside stations that had previously been closed. Three stations "in the middle of nowhere", now boast a usership figures between 9,000 and 18,000 pa.

To take one example, Beasdale could be developed as a focus for historic interest walks in classic *Bonnie Prince Charlie* country – he landed and sailed four times from the coast within a short walk of this station, and stayed in hiding in two caves nearby. Car-borne walkers can use Beasdale station to make linear walks, either inland or along the coast to Arisaig or Lochailort, returning by train.

Doubtless similar programmes could be developed for other little-used stations. Falls of Cruachan lies at the start of a track up the much-climbed Ben Cruachan.

No decision should be taken regarding closure of these stations until a pilot marketing and promotional programme has been carried out in a serious attempt to publicize their attractions to identify the potential for retaining at them.

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: NO. The possibility of voluntary / community rail partnership management should be explored in certain rural scenic areas - eg Beasdale (see below for more). Contact the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line for details of how their stations have been restored and maintained by volunteer Members. Also Lancashire County Council for CRP's.

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

Q27 comments: Local meetings with the franchisee on a regular basis.

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: YES. Certainly the "Highland Chieftain" and the Highland sleeper services need to continue north of Edinburgh.

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. Edinburgh Waverley is fast becoming another Birmingham New Street – a nightmare to find the right platform in a hurry, with multiple departures at the same time.

## Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: The rolling stock is effectively owned by the banks, which possess a licence to print money with their leasing charges. It is time that the Train Operators be allowed to purchase their own stock.

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

Q32 comments: Trolley service throughout on the Fort William and Oban lines.

## 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: On the Highland sleeper services, make more coaches available from Edinburgh northwards. And get a sensible “deal” from the ROSCO’s which reflects their *real* costs

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

Q35 comments: There should be a general presumption AGAINST banning alcohol. It should only be banned where there is evidence of consistent uncontrollable behaviour on a particular service – ie uncontrollable by on-train staff. This would be most unlikely on any of the sleeper services. Indeed it would be greatly to the detriment of the sleepers if the lounge car service, with its Nightcap Bar, were to disappear.

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: YES, the Sleeper services should continue to be specified as an integral part of the Franchise. More companies involved will add complexity and costs.

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: The services should NOT be an "option", as that could too easily become an option to cease them. The Highland sleepers, at least, would best be included explicitly within a single main Scotrail franchise. The Fort William service has an additional purpose, in carrying early-riser day passengers in the mornings and providing the last journey home at night to the Scottish Central Belt.

Capacity for comfortably seated passengers from the Scottish Lowlands northwards should be a Franchise requirement on both the Fort William and Inverness sleeper services.

The requirement should be that the sleeper services runs at least 6 nights per week, but the operator should be given more flexibility over timing and other matters. Such flexibility would be greater *within* a single Scotrail franchise than outwith.

This said, it could be a mistake to make the requirements for the sleeper service overly explicit, which could act to the detriment of future innovation by the operator.

There should be encouragement for the operator to increase capacity on the Fort William service during peak times.

Subsidies are always going to be an issue for public transport in the Highlands. In this regard:

(a) To contain any subsidy greater efforts need to be made to improve average occupancy levels during off-peak periods, be they winter or mid-week. The ITT should require that the franchisee produce a marketing plan specifically targeted at filling berths at off peak times. This should contain proposals for promotional activities and a pricing structure which will take account of train timings.

For instance the current sleeper arrival time at Fort William is too late for a winter weekend climbing trip, but there is a wealth of mountaineering opportunity available from stations further south, where much new accommodation has been developed recently; the market for winter hill-walking has increased dramatically in the past ten years, with many people taking mid-week breaks as well as at weekends.



(b) We would like to see an explicit acceptance in the tender documents of the wider economic benefits of the sleeper service to the West Highland economy and transport infrastructure. The very existence of this unique service is a positive icon for the whole of Scotland. No visitor makes use of all the services available in a single journey, but the fact that all such options exist influences their decision to visit Scotland in the first place.

(c) We remain concerned that the sleeper services as a whole may still be allocated disproportionate track access charges, at a time of day when train paths are not at a premium; there is a case to be made for marginal pricing for these services.

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 Appeal is:

(a) for all passengers, the ability to save a day's travel in each direction (whether by road or by rail) and, probably, hotel accommodation,

(b) for the tourist, the magical experience of waking up in the Highlands after leaving the big city a few hours before.

Value of the sleeper service to Fort William and the West Highlands:

(a) Fort William is probably the more important destination, for business and tourists, than Oban. It has successfully "invented" itself as the "Outdoor capital of the UK". The Mallaig link is probably now as important as Oban for onward travel to the Isles. The London to Fort William journey is an established and recommended "best train in Britain"

That said, there is an urgent need to provide a much better rail connection between the Fort William sleeper and Oban, which remains an important destination in its own right as well as serving other parts of the Hebrides. Would it be feasible, in the summer, to divert two sleeper coaches from the Aberdeen service to Oban? As a minimum an early and late bus connection should be provided year-round between Crianlarich or Tyndrum and Oban where no train service is possible.

(b) In regard to timing, there has always been a conflict of interest between short-break sleeper passengers, who would prefer an earlier arrival time, and day-trippers looking for a later departure from the Glasgow area. In the longer run the whole question of the sleeper timing should be considered in conjunction with the Oban connection. If custom can be increased sufficiently, it is possible that a business case could be developed to justify an additional train, at least at peak times.

(c) In view of the improved communications to mainland Europe some people would switch holidays from Scotland to other parts of Europe should there be no sleeper service to get to the Highlands.

Facilities:

(a) Ensuite facilities with toilets and maybe showers for 1<sup>st</sup> class with both single and 2 berth compartments. If the “higher ticket” end of the service were marketed as a hotel+travel package, perhaps passengers might be prepared to pay more.

(b) However, at the “low ticket” end, introduction of continental-style *courette* coaches should be considered as an option for the franchisee, containing Economy 4-berth compartments.

(c) Accommodation should be at least the standard of that in other European sleeper services.

(d) The lounge car should be retained – **and promoted** – it is a much better facility than on many mainland European sleeper services.

(d) Good sound insulation should be retained between the compartments.

(f) Card door entry keys could be considered.

(g) Power sockets should be provided in each compartment for computers and ‘phone chargers.

**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: