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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: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, then it seems likely that the concept of a 'dual focus' franchise would add further complexity to a structure that is already overly complex and so is probably best avoided.

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

Q2 comments: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, then I would certainly favour one of a short duration (no more than five years). Long franchises breed complacency and are inflexible in the event of changing circumstances. A short franchise term will maximise the ability to adapt to changes in the future such as a major industry restructuring, which is inevitable since the present structure of the GB rail industry is unsustainable.

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

Q3 comments: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, there should be no risk support mechanism within the franchise. Any private company that chooses to bid for a franchise – when the services involved could be more efficiently delivered directly by the state – must be prepared to accept all of the risk that comes with it or else it should refrain from bidding.

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

Q4 comments: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, the full value of any increased profits should be returned to the Scottish Government (and preferably re-invested in the rail industry) rather than being pocketed by shareholders. The railway is an essential public service; it should not be commercially exploited in pursuit of profit at the expense of taxpayers.

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

Q5 comments: The provision of passenger rail services should be solely the responsibility of the state, for the benefit of passengers and taxpayers. There should be no third party involvement. The railway is an essential public service; it should not be commercially exploited in pursuit of profit at the expense of taxpayers.

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

Q6 comments: Reintegration and Nationalisation of the rail industry.

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: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government

and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, any franchisee that fails in honouring its franchise commitments must be immediately stripped of that franchise as well as any other rail franchises it operates.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, I would not wish to see the franchisee given additional financial incentives for good performance since good performance should be regarded as a normal obligation on the franchisee and not viewed as something exceptional. The franchisee should however be penalised 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 comments: One system for simplicity.

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: The acceptable limit is about 10 minutes. Longer periods of standing (up to 20 minutes) may be tolerable provided the crowding is not so great that standing passengers have nothing to lean against (and are obstructing the movement of others through or getting on/off the train).

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: - A reduction in the number of direct services would be somewhat detrimental to passenger convenience, especially to those with mobility problems.

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: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, then all aspects of service provision must be specified by Government. The franchisee cannot be trusted to make those decisions in the best interests of passengers. The railway is an essential public service; it should not be commercially exploited in pursuit of profit at the expense of taxpayers.

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

Q18 comments: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, the contract must be heavily specified, to avoid service provision being subjected to the whims of private companies and their inherent desire to prioritise commercial gain over service quality. The railway is an essential public service; it should not be commercially exploited in pursuit of profit at the expense of taxpayers.

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

Q19 comments: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, then I would expect the franchisee to get on with the job of providing the services it is contracted to provide. I would not be looking to it for innovation.

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: All fares must be regulated by Government. The railway is an essential public service; it should not be commercially exploited in pursuit of profit at the expense of taxpayers.

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: It seems somewhat unfair to penalise passengers using routes that have recently been enhanced. I do not support this idea.

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: These matters should be solely the responsibility of the state, for the benefit of passengers and taxpayers. There should be no third party involvement, which would result in more fragmentation. The railway is an essential public service; it should not be commercially exploited in pursuit of profit at the expense of taxpayers.

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: The fewer organisations that are involved, the better, in the interests of maximising efficiency.

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

Q27 comments: I feel that local communities would be more inclined towards supporting their local station if they saw it as a permanent element of a public service rather than something in the temporary custody of a 'here today, gone tomorrow' private company.

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: Cross-border services should continue north of Edinburgh for

the convenience of passengers. It is probably preferable that Scottish Ministers specify these services; I have very little confidence in DfT's competence in relation to railway matters.

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: I do not support the 'Edinburgh Hub' proposal. All of the supposed benefits mentioned in the consultation document are merely addressing anomalies and inconveniences that exist only as a result of the absurd manner in which passenger rail services are currently franchised in Great Britain. The proposal seems to be a kind of 'tidying up' exercise aimed at improving organisational convenience at the expense of passenger convenience.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Rolling stock (especially new rolling stock) should be owned outright by Transport Scotland or another Government agency since the involvement of private ROSCOs is sucking money out of the railway, resulting in exceptionally poor value for money for taxpayers. It is unfortunate that an option of state ownership was not pursued when the new Class 380s were acquired.

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

Q32 comments: On long distance services, there should be at least one toilet per carriage. Toilet provision on board West Highland Line trains is currently inadequate – queues are commonplace and toilets run out of water en route. A buffet trolley service is required on services with duration in excess of two hours.

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: Low priority.

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: Services wholly within Scotland are not of long enough duration to justify first-class provision (certainly not between Glasgow and Edinburgh).

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

Q35 comments: An outright alcohol ban is not the answer. Some people are capable of drinking responsibly while others are capable of behaving in an antisocial manner on trains even when sober.

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: Continue to specify. The railway is an essential public service; it should not be commercially exploited in pursuit of profit at the expense of passenger convenience.

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: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, then the fewer separate franchises there are, the better.

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: It should be investigated whether there is demand to justify introducing sleeper services departing on Saturday nights (i.e. sleeper services to run seven days a week). A sleeper service must be maintained to and from Glasgow, as Scotland's largest city. There may well be merit in switching the Fort William sleeper service to Oban though to do so would require significant investment in facilities and upgrading the railway to Oban (which would be no bad thing). At the very least, there should be a train service between Oban and Crianlarich to connect with the Fort William sleeper.

Travellers nowadays expect better facilities on board, e.g. en-suite, and would probably be willing to pay more to have them available.

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: **Franchising of rail passenger services represents the worst possible deal for passengers and taxpayers and I strongly object to its continuance under any circumstances.** I recognise that the franchising model exists because of failure on the part of the UK Government and that Transport Scotland is bound by current UK legislation.

If, however, re-franchising is the only option available in the meantime, then the franchise specification could demand a commitment from the franchisee to fund rail electrification work.