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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: There are no merits as a dual focus franchise. The rail franchise should be for the whole of Scotland and not be awarded in a piecemeal fashion. The descriptions economic rail and social rail element should not be incorporated within the requirements of a new franchise. Rail services should be provided by one operator and be the benefit of all people in Scotland. If necessary some areas of Scotland should received more subsidy to enable all parts of Scotland to receive an adequate level of service provision.

The rail service provided by the Scottish Government should comprise 100mph trains and track infrastructure suitable for trains to travel at 100mph. Many areas of Scotland have track speed restrictions of 40mph; 50mph and 60mph. At Montrose the Dundee to Aberdeen twin line is reduced to single track and this impacts on the route. Many areas of the Fife railway line are not to the standard of a modern railway and prevent trains operating at a reasonable speed of 80mph.

In the last two years or so, ScotRail has decided to reduce the number of trains which stop at Stonehaven station. To save a few minutes on the Aberdeen to Edinburgh route people are severely inconvenienced and have to travel to Dundee on the Glasgow service and then get the next Edinburgh train.

The franchise agreement should be suitable to allow additional new stations and services to be added to the existing network. At present the signalling system on the Edinburgh / Glasgow services to Aberdeen restricts the train service availability. Computer technology and satnav systems on trains would enable many more services to be provided. Additional track could provide passing spaces for trains.

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

Q2 comments: Franchises should be for a twenty five (25) year period and

this would correspond to the economical life of trains and carriages. The existing terms and conditions of contracts between rail operators and the rolling stock provider may not be in the public interest at the present time.

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: There should be no profit share mechanism. The franchise operator should price to provide a specified number of train services each day. Additional income received, from passenger growth as an example, should be re-invested in infrastructure improvements.

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

Q5 comments: Third parties should as local authorities, developers and private organisations should be allowed to specify / fund local improvements to the rail network.

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: Performance bonds and guarantees which may give a feel good factor are not free and could resulting in a large cost being built into the rail service provision.

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: There should be one system for the whole of Scotland. Within the last few years great emphasis has been put on the Glasgow to Edinburgh service and much money spent on this service. There need to be equality of opportunity around Scotland such as a cross Aberdeen local service with additional stations; improvements in the Inverness area and on the Far North line from Inverness to Wick/Thurso.

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

Q11 comments: The body representing passenger interests need to be more proactive in seeking out passenger comment and representation of complaints and requests for improvement.

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 permitted standing limit of ten minutes is a guidance figure to indicate that a service is over-crowded. Every person who purchases a ticket should have a seat on the train at the time he/she wishes to travel. The solution is increased capacity on the network such as longer platforms, more carriages on trains, more frequent trains etc. The emphasis should be to provide a public service.

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: Provision of point to point direct services is extremely important. Requirements to use interchange services would be a big disadvantage to travellers especially families and disabled persons. Also interchange services usually have a lengthy delay period between one train arriving the continuing train departing. This interchanging is a huge backward step in service provision.

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: The Government should direct service provision such as frequency and stations to be used on the service. The public are paying for the train service so we should have input into the service being provide. The lack of a cross Aberdeen service with additional local stations is against the public interest and forces thousands of people to use cars for journeys.

Transport Scotland should undertake better consultation with local authorities, business interests and the travelling public to enable needs to be determines.

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

Q18 comments: We should have a very proscriptive service requirement as determined by Government with the ability to modify for increased station numbers and better services,

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: Fares policy should be for a fairer, better Scotland to enable those wishing to travel to have a cost effective, safe and enjoyable journey in reasonable comfort.

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 regulated by Government to provide a travel service at the lowest possible cost, whilst providing a good train service across the whole of Scotland.

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: The rail service is primarily a service to the public. Public services such as the road network, health service, police and ambulances are provided by Government in the public interest. Does Transport Scotland imply that we should pay something if we have to call an ambulance. Government and local authorities pay for repairs to our road network so why should they not pay towards the rail service.

Government policy is to provide an incentive to get people to travel on a train rather than use their car so increases above inflation to ticket prices act against Government policy. Passenger revenue contributions should increase at double the rate of inflation however 50% of the increase should go towards improvement to the network. Better infrastructure and improved train services will increase passenger numbers.

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: Off-peak fares should be 50% of peak fares such that it encourages people to travel at off-peak times. The frequency of off-peak trains need to be reasonable to meet the needs of the travelling public.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Additional stations should be proposed by local authorities, developers, rail users and interested parties. The present cost benefit appraisal criteria may not fully address the issues of having a station. What is the cost of young peoples further education and work availability being destroyed because a station is not provided. The Scottish Government may be operating an exclusion policy.

There should be no consideration given to stations being closed

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: Additional stations should be proposed by local authorities and partly funded by them to demonstrate support.

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: There should be no change in the present arrangement where Network Rail owns all the stations and infrastructure

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

Q27 comments: Residents would like to use a railway station which is considered to be safe, clean, has toilets, and adequate protection from the weather.

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

Q28 comments: Basic services should be available at all stations. Provision of a staff person at the railway station during normal service hours especially in the dark would improve the safety of rail users. A main station should have a warm waiting room, meals and refreshments available during the day and evening.

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 are a key part of the rail network. Services should not terminate at Edinburgh but continue to run to Aberdeen and Inverness with good connections to stations in Aberdeen area and north of Inverness.

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: See answer to Q29. Provision of an Edinburgh hub would be detrimental to good railway services.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Network Rail could own trains and rent them to the rail operators at a no profit cost.

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

Q32 comments: All trains should have at least two toilets in case of breakdown fault in one. Refreshments should be available on all intercity trains. Although provision of refreshments may not be a standalone profitable business it should be seen as part of the required journey experience.

During winter months all trains outwith the central belt should have sufficient drinking water and emergency food available in case of the train being detained in a remote location during breakdown.

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: Sufficient standard class seats should be provided. Numbers of people on each train can be monitored if an issue of overcrowding becomes apparent or notified to the passenger body.

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

Q35 comments:

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: Provision of the Caledonian Sleeper is part of the existing railway service and should be retained and specified as present.

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 Caledonian Sleeper is a cross border service and therefore is suitable to be contracted separately from the main Scotrail

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 trains used for the Caledonian Sleeper Service should be replaced by modern trains with improved facilities as you would expect in a hotel.

The appeal of the sleeper service is to enable a person to get a nights sleep

whilst travelling a long distance.

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: