

Mike McGrath

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: no comment

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

Q2 comments: long enough to allow for continuity and development of services without the service provider having to worry about bidding for the next phase without enough time for proper management

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

Q3 comments: no comment

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

Q4 comments: no comment

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

Q5 comments: no comment

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

Q6 comments: no comment

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

Q7 comments: no comment

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

Q8 comments: no comment

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: both – good to reward good performance it pays dividends

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 a common system but with some elements that can be customised to allow for differences between routes and service groups

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

Q11 comments: ask passengers what is important and have a section on passenger centred issues in a system with a common core of questions but a section customised to meet different needs of different services and users

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

Q12 comments: no comment

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: no comment

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

Q14 comments: no comment

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: what is meant by standing times? Is this how long a

passenger should stand for part of a journey or something else? If the former then the time could be longer

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: To be passenger friendly it is much better to have direct services where this is possible. Interchange stations will increase journey times and lose passengers to more convenient forms of transport – which are not going to be as green as trains.

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: There should be some guidance provided, based upon previous experience and passenger feedback – but franchisee should also be involved. Where there are services that are vital (especially to more marginalised groups), but not used by very many people, the Govt should be able to stipulate minimum service levels.

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

Q18 comments: no comment

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

Q19 comments: no comment

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: to encourage rail use, to keep fares to a minimum for a good level of service, not to try and find the maximum the market will bear – which could be extremely difficult for the most marginalised groups who often have few other options.

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 above – fares should be set to reasonable levels, without companies working to maximise profits just for shareholders. There needs to be a high level of public engagement in the setting fares for all journeys – but in particular to encourage use of trains, reduce car journeys and to increase accessibility for the poorest in the community.

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 above

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: There needs to be some sophisticated research done, not just a quick survey, to see what incentives are required for people to switch to travelling in the off-peak. Also need to take into account the length of journeys and whether peak/off-peak is a useful distinction or discriminatory to those making the longest journeys.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Need to look at: demand and use; whether incentives to use public transport, specifically trains, will increase use at any stations; proximity of other stations; other public transport connections; accessibility of station; ease of parking nearby; demographics of adjoining populations and whether they have alternative transport available; whether it is feasible for station to be unmanned and still used safely

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 if that works but needs clear definitions about who is responsible for what

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: Clearly one organisation responsible for stations and another for the train line has not worked too well – so much better if one organisation can be responsible – better chains of accountability and better public service

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

Q27 comments: no comment

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

Q28 comments: Main stations – with a full range of facilities as it the case at Glasgow Central and Queen street, then manned smaller stations and unmanned smaller stations seems to work well

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: Services must continue to go North of Edinburgh – the passengers who need to travel further north need a good service, to prevent

over reliance on less green forms of travel. It is important that train providers actually provide a service that is user friendly and what passengers want. Being able to get onto a train that is going to a preferred destination, rather than having to change too often, or interchange with other types of transport benefits passengers, who are largely tax payers. It provides the most energy efficient form of transportation which benefits everyone and helps UK to achieve emissions targets. Services should be specified by partnership of DoT and Scottish Ministers after analysis of current travelling trends, analysis of unmet demand or potential to grow these markets.

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: There should be cross border services to Glasgow and the West – any connection through an Edinburgh Hub will add unacceptable times to journeys and make rail options less viable than air and road. This would be a completely retrograde step and render the idea of UK links by rail almost useless. It will reduce economic opportunities for Scotland, with links to the South, and the rest of Europe, being more difficult and time consuming. I find it hard to believe that this is an option that is even being considered. The population in and around Glasgow is higher than that in and around Edinburgh and the amount of extra travel time that will be incurred can have serious effects on economic activity and productivity not to mention loss of private/personal time.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: no comment

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

Q32 comments: Facilities should include toilets on all trains, and shop/trolley options on all journeys of one hour or longer. Time on the train, rather than route served, should be the driving force here

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: Some train lines appear to have solved the problem with mobile phone or Wi-Fi service coverage being good with a strong signal on the trains, others have not. So best to learn from those that have and provide high quality service – this will provide another incentive for UK travel by train for work related travel as well as leisure travel.

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: Balance between first and other classes should be looked at – many trains have empty first class seats for many journeys – and for local journeys first class is not required.

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

Q35 comments: What evidence is there about 1) how much violence, damage or nuisance is caused by allowing alcohol consumption on trains? 2) How safe to passengers feel when there are people drinking on trains, in particular on long journeys? 3) How does the use of alcohol change/increase/ worsen behaviour when linked to sporting or other events?

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

Q36 comments: Easier to read timetables, build on excellent use of websites to keep people informed. Stream information in trains – to the displays used

to highlight the next stop and final destination of trains. Make frequent announcements on trains and stations.

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 sleeper has a very high potential to build and extend economic options for Scotland. It allows individuals to travel on business between London and different Scottish Cities in a cost effective way and with a low carbon footprint compared to other forms of travel. The sleeper can be used to help companies make decisions about relocating, or expanding into Scotland can be greatly enhanced with easy access through overnight train travel for staff. There are many economic benefits, including travel during 'invisible' or sleeping time that can save companies much money in travel time and hotel costs. In addition the length of the working day can be preserved.

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: Don't know – whatever is likely to make it most sustainable

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 of the sleeper services is very high. As a very frequent user between Glasgow and London it is appealing because: 1) it is convenient –Glasgow Central is well linked to the Strathclyde train network and allows passengers from many areas of West of Scotland to get to the train quickly and easily. I assume the same is true of Edinburgh users 2) Using the sleeper promotes my work-life balance. I can spend time with my family before travelling, so that the inconvenience of having to be away from home is minimised 3) I can use the sleeper after a full day's work –so I do not lose work time for travel 4) On arrival I am able to do a full day's work – again not losing work time for travel 5) Even if the sleeper is slightly late it is unlikely

that I will be late for any meetings starting at 9am (contrast with flying where planes are frequently late arriving into London) 6) I avoid the cost of using work time to travel and then additional costs of hotels in London or Scotland 7) Late departure times give flexibility to take advantage of more informal meetings after work 8) The carbon footprint is lower than air and road options 9) This is the best way (and least boring) to travel between Scotland and London and it minimises family and work disruption. 10) The flexible and invisible method of travel between Scotland and London makes travelling 400 miles much easier and opens up more economic development opportunities for Scotland. More promotion of the service would probably increase demand.

Timing is important – trains leaving too early, arriving in the very early morning are unlikely to be appealing – the appeal is that the train travels during normal sleeping periods. Later trains that arrive at their destination later are unlikely to appeal – more hanging about waiting for the train (at the moment it is possible to get the last trains from outlying stations to Glasgow and Edinburgh for the sleeper or Underground and Overground trains in London). Any later and it becomes more problematic to get to the main stations. Arriving later at the destination then makes being on time for early morning meetings more challenging (the same problem with early morning flights between Scotland and London). Being able to board sleepers earlier, especially in London, would be very much more convenient – rather than having to hang about on the station concourse.

What market research has been done on destinations? It would be severely restrictive if all sleeper services went through an Edinburgh hub – in particular for customers on the West Coast. The current situation where the trains from Glasgow and Edinburgh meet at, or on the return separate at, Carstairs is a sensible way to maintain the service. By routing through Edinburgh this will add more than one hour on journeys to and from Glasgow and then passengers will see that other forms of transport are more viable, despite the higher carbon footprint. As far as destinations are concerned I would like to see some evidence of demand but assume that services to Aberdeen and Inverness are essential.

The sleeper trains should have more single cabin accommodation available. For those paying a solo supplement at the moment the cabin is very crowded with the upper bunks in place. It would be very helpful for the cabins to have electrical sockets to allow phones, computers, cameras and other gadgets to be charged.

Books of flexi tickets should be made more readily available to customers who are unable to use first class travel – they are more convenient and flexible – but should be rebranded as flexible (not first class) tickets.

I would be willing to pay more for tickets if necessary but there needs to be a balance so that the cost is not more than the combined cost of a flight and hotel in London.

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: Carbon use per passenger mile travelled, number of road and air journeys averted by increased use of the train, recycling of materials purchased on the train