

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

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

☐

/

Group/Organisation

☒

Please tick as appropriate

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Please tick as appropriate ☒ Yes ☐ No

- (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

- (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?

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- (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?

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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?

We favour a single franchise of multiple service specification. We believe that the dual focus franchise model would reflect the nature of the range of services in Scotland and the varied reasons for which passengers use the rail network, provided that there is an appropriate balance between the two elements.

The social requirement for the franchisee to maintain services specified routes will reduce the impact of peripherality and ensure that passengers, particularly those in rural areas, have sufficient transport options.

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

A longer contract with a pre-specified break period will encourage investment from train operators and deliver improvements for rail users.

A shorter contract will likely discourage bids in the first instance. If bids are made, we believe that there is an increased likelihood that they will be less attractive and competitive. This would have direct implications for the future quality of the service and the cost incurred by taxpayers in the form of public subsidy.

Furthermore, given that the franchise will commence in 2014, the duration of a "short" contract could be potentially as brief as two years. We thus believe that the length of the contract should not take into account the ongoing constitutional debate.

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?

Sufficient pressure must be placed upon the franchisee to improve service levels. The rail industry must not be exempt from responding to the needs of its paying customers.

Incentivising good performance will encourage innovation and lead to a determined effort on the part of the franchisee to improve services, whilst at the same time demanding minimum performance standards through financial penalties. We believe that this performance regime will discourage complacency and improve service levels for rail users.

We would also support greater transparency in this area. To this end, we believe that information with regards to performance penalties and incentives should be more widely advertised and easily accessible for rail users. There should be more information at a local level.

We would also support further consideration of the proposal that passengers should receive a partial refund if they are unexpectedly forced to use a rail replacement bus service, where the cause can be attributed to the franchisee.

10. Should the performance regime be aligned with actual routes or service groups, or should there be one system for the whole of Scotland?

Passengers should be able to expect a high-level of service wherever they are in Scotland. We would thus support the proposal for a Scotland-wide performance regime.

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:

Additional Comments: There are a number of other issues that we would like considered with regards to service quality, with particular reference to the North East of Scotland.

We believe that there are clear opportunities for improving the frequency and scope of services in the North East and that rail travel can play a greater role as part of an integrated transport system. There has been an unprecedented increase in demand for rail services in the North East in recent years, but this has yet to be adequately reflected through improvements to the services available. There thus needs to be improved connectivity within and to and from the North East.

1. We continue to strongly support the introduction of Crossrail, a cross-city rail service between Inverurie, Aberdeen and Stonehaven.
2. We continue to strongly support the introduction of a new station at Kintore. We recognise that there would be a need to identify the appropriate balance between journey times and stopping patterns. We are aware that Nestrans has proposed that ten services per day in each direction should stop at the station and would support these plans. Whilst it is important that communities such as Kintore should have access to services, there is also a need to reduce the duration of inter-city journeys.
3. We also believe that there is a need to capitalise on the opportunity for further cross-Aberdeen journeys. In addition to more services between the Central Belt and Inverurie, we would welcome the introduction of Inverness-Stonehaven services.
4. We firmly believe that there need to be more services between Aberdeen and Inverness on Sundays, with trains operating on the route earlier in the day. At present, the first train from Aberdeen to Inverness on a Sunday departs at 10:00, arriving in Inverness at 12:10, with just five trains operating in each direction on this route on a Sunday. We understand that Nestrans and Hitrans have previously submitted information and proposals to Transport Scotland with regards to improvements in this area.
5. We believe there should be an increase in the number of services stopping at Portlethen. We believe that this could lead to a significant increase in the number of local residents using the rail service and that this could be achieved without disproportionately impacting upon the journey times of long-distance trains.
6. We would support introducing a number of express inter-city trains with limited stops between Aberdeen and the Central Belt, predominantly at peak times. This would reduce journey times for inter-city passengers, particularly business users, without disproportionately impacting upon other services on the route. We believe that passengers on those trains travelling long-distances to destinations including London could particularly benefit.

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?

Passengers should be able to expect a seat when travelling. Some passengers may accept the need to stand on busy suburban services, but where this is a frequent occurrence additional capacity should be introduced. On long distance journeys capacity should wherever possible reflect demand. Customers undertaking longer journeys may be deterred from travelling by train in future if their train is not comfortable and if they do not have a seat.

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:

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

We would agree with the conclusions the consultation document draws upon and the indication that Transport Scotland would support a targeted specification over a minimal or full specification for the reasons suggested.

The objective should be to use the existing network to link Scotland as efficiently and speedily as possible where the full reach of the network is maintained and where possible developed. It is to the benefit of passengers, TOCs and the Scottish Government that these services are fully supported and used and there should therefore be a flexibility which creates a balance where TOCs have a greater obligation on some routes, particularly those in more rural areas while having the freedom to be innovative on other more potentially profitable urban and suburban routes in line with customer demand.

The concern would be that those rural routes such as the Far North line referred to, will always struggle to reach profitability if TOCs are forever straitjacketed and never allowed an opportunity to innovate and perhaps apply lessons learned elsewhere. While it is essential that there remain conditions in the franchise so as to avoid potential loopholes and a 'get out clause' for the contractors, they should be allowed an influence in how to maximise profits on the line to the future benefit of taxpayer and passenger alike.

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

The network must be seen as dynamic and adaptable and not a fixed asset. In this regard consideration must be given to channelling funding for increasing services or developing new

services and links.

In previous experience, the business potential of new stations is consistently underestimated. Without exception, all newly opened stations have delivered new passengers and revenues and this should be taken in to account.

Scottish rail fares

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

Passenger fares determine the uptake of rail services and ultimately determine the success or failure of rail routes and the network at large. While a balance must be struck between the interests of the passenger, any private contracted service provider and the Government and taxpayers at large via the subsidy, maintaining a valued rail network which is used must be the ultimate aim.

It is a concern that Scotrail passenger revenue only meets about one quarter of the total costs for the provision of Scotrail services on the Scottish network, but growing the network and financial returns will only be generated from increased passenger use and modal shifts which underlines how essential it is to compete against other transport modes and offer a complete service in terms of price, comfort, convenience and opportunity.

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)?

We would argue that the simplification of fares and categories is of paramount importance. The average passenger does not distinguish between regulated fares and non-regulated fares and merely looks at the bottom line.

In recent years, most passengers have been frustrated at the above inflation increases in prices but this is in an economic climate where money is tighter and where they do not necessarily perceive an improved experience in service and facilities and therefore value for money.

There is a strong argument for regulated fares to favour commuters who would mostly be using suburban and inner-city services and this would most likely be served by a subsidised season ticket. The environmental rewards for encouraging commuter rail travel over cars are great and should be recognised by the Government when considering the subsidy.

More could be done to separate business traffic with perhaps a dedicated business service which does not detract from individual passengers seeking value fares. There have been experiences from passengers recounted to us where they do not manage to book an advance cheaper fare and then board a train (in one case mentioned to us a sleeper train) only to find the train fairly empty. If it is the case that businesses are booking up cheaper fares but not using the tickets, although recognising that the revenue is still coming in, there is a further risk of damaging consumer confidence which will not help attract future non-business passengers and is a waste of the subsidy.

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?

We accept that government policy is to ensure that the investment required is minimal and represents good value for taxpayers while also recognising that TOCs should not be allowed

to rely on the subsidy but should be encouraged to be creative.

In general more could be learned from the online airline pricing system where greater incentive is given to those booking early and with flights structured in a matrix with a variety of one way fares. While online rail fares do have a similar system the booking system which offers wildly differing return fares and single journey fares is frustrating and confusing.

The airlines also allow bookings more than three months in advance (often up to a year) which we believe impacts on the competition against rail travel. With rail fares coming online only 3 months in advance, many passengers would prefer to book a cheaper flight further in advance than waiting to see if they are lucky enough to secure a cheaper rail fare closer to the time and risk missing out on a cheaper airfare as a result.

Another anomaly can be found at station vendors where the single ticket price is only marginally cheaper than a return, and passengers are encouraged to buy a return whether they need it or not. This is totally disingenuous and while there should be a customer incentive to buying a return ticket the current difference is unjustifiable to the customer where sometimes the difference is as little as £1. This dents passenger confidence and leads to questions of the value and integrity of fare pricing.

Other incentives might be considered such as a points system, aside from the season ticket (which should continue to offer the best value), for those who make regular journeys on a particular line or perhaps across the network. This type of loyalty system, again as used by some airlines could prove more attractive especially where there is a choice in considering what mode of transport to use.

Although one cannot compare like for like, perhaps there are more lessons to be learned from the airlines such as additional retail opportunities on board and at stations, or paid-for at seat entertainment which can help attract more revenue and ultimately reduce the subsidy.

In terms of increasing fares to sections of the network which have recently been enhanced, we would urge caution. There must be a clear definition on what a suitable level of enhancement would be and a direct correlation to any proposed fare increase. Passengers expect to see maintenance for wear and tear as well as modernisation over time reflected in the existing fare. Enhancements therefore should only refer to significant enhancement to journey times or major enhancement to comfort of on board services.

It would appear that continental services are faster, cheaper and more comfortable, and we would urge Transport Scotland to consider what circumstances might be transferable to Scottish services.

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?

On all routes, peak times are likely to vary and be nuanced by the particular demands of passengers. We would argue as such that the TOCs should be encouraged to be creative and while there should be incentives to help increase capacity, the definition of peak and off-peak hours should not necessarily be specified in the contract. This should be subject to review if the TOCs took advantage of this freedom by imposing disproportionate and lengthy peak periods.

Scottish stations

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

With more and more people opting to use the rail network, we must ensure that increases in rail capacity are passed on to rural areas. Rural links to main transport hubs must share in service improvement if Scotland as a whole is to benefit from a faster, more reliable rail network and if train travel is to prove a competitive alternative to road and air travel. Improving commuter rail links through upgrades such as those suggested above would help make public transport a more convenient option and further increase the popularity of the rail network.

When considering what rail stations are required and where, there is a need to take into account factors including passenger numbers and future population growth and demand. There should also be comprehensive analysis of the financial benefits or implications of any proposal and substantive engagement with local communities.

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?

We are aware that there have been cases where third party involvement and investment has proven successful, most recently with the opening of a new station Laurencekirk Station.

We believe that local authorities can play an important role in informing the decision-making process with regards to whether to open a new station or introduce a service. We would welcome an increasingly joined-up approach and more detailed consideration of local authorities' development and strategic plans and growth patterns. This will assist in indicating locations and services which will require future investment.

Whilst councils should certainly be allowed to make a significant analytical or financial contribution, they should not be obliged to do so. Such third party involvement should be on a case by case basis.

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:

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

We would support further consideration of the possibility of letting unused space within a station to third parties such as local community groups and social enterprises. For example, we believe that a community cafe would be a welcome addition to many stations.

We also believe that there is scope for communities to become increasingly involved in maintaining their station, helping beautify the station and improve the local environment. However, this should be strictly on a voluntary basis and should not relieve the franchisee of their responsibilities in this area.

The publication of performance indicators with regards to the cleanliness of local stations could also lead to greater local accountability and increase community engagement.

We firmly believe that the franchisee should work with local authorities and other partners to ensure that stations become transport hubs through improved links to other sustainable

transport systems, and adequate car parking and cycle storage facilities. Increasing the transport options available to local communities will encourage residents to make use of rail services more often. We believe that Inverurie station represents a prime example of a destination where such a strategy could prove highly successful.

We believe that there may also be an opportunity for the franchisee to promote key services, such as commuter services, and to simplify timetables at local stations in order to generate interest and increase use amongst the local community.

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

Q28 comments:

Additional Comments: There are a number of other issues that we would like considered with regards to stations in Scotland, with particular reference to the North East of Scotland.

1. We are very keen to see the introduction of a new station at Kintore to serve a significant and fast-growing community. This proposal has the backing of Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans and the local community. We have no doubt that, like Laurencekirk, a station at Kintore would be very well received and that it would exceed expectations in terms of passenger numbers.
2. In supporting the introduction of Crossrail, we also recognise that there may be potential to introduce new local stations in the long-term, incorporating other local communities into the project. For example, we are aware that there is significant local support for a new station at Newtonhill and that Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Authority has included in its Strategic Development Plan.
3. There is a need to ensure that all stations are DDA compliant.
4. We would also draw attention to Nestrans' proposals for improvements to car parking at some stations in the North East, in particular Inverurie and Stonehaven, where demand for car parking regularly exceeds supply. The availability of car parking is an important consideration as a lack of available car parking can deter people from taking the train.

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?

Yes, cross-border services should continue beyond Edinburgh to Aberdeen. The benefit to the passenger in having the availability of direct services from North East Scotland including the major Scottish metropolitan areas of Dundee and Aberdeen, to England is practical as well as psychological.

It should be noted that in addition to a time penalty in changing trains at Edinburgh there is also the significant inconvenience especially to those passengers who are elderly, disabled, families with young children or passengers with luggage. In addition, business and other travellers will be interrupted in any work or other activities in which they were engaged. Moreover if relying on connections, the impact or indeed fear of any delays will have a major impediment on the enjoyment and comfort of the journey.

Relatively few trains per day currently continue beyond Edinburgh to Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire but the service they offer in terms of convenience and saving time are an important option for many customers.

It should also be noted that the UK government announced in 2011 that trains on the East Coast mainline will be bi-modal specifically in order to facilitate direct trains through the non-electric sections beyond Edinburgh to Aberdeen and Inverness. There would be no advantage to taxpayers if the benefits of this decision could not be enjoyed in northern Scotland.

Since the franchise is mostly serviced by cities and towns South of the Border we believe there is no reason why the lead ministry should not continue to be the Department of Transport in consultation with Transport Scotland.

In terms of the benefit of the service to taxpayers, we would argue that the service is beneficial to the economy and therefore the taxpayer at large.

The north east of Scotland is the most dynamic growth centre in the UK and it is definitely in the interest of UK to make sure that it is supported and continues to attract people as well as investment. The mixed and vibrant community in north east Scotland means that people from across the UK and beyond have settled in the region. They require and rely on having good access to family and friends across the country and for them in turn to visit Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Good links, by air, road and rail combine as an important part of the economic package and act as a key economic development driver in making the region attractive, improving residents' quality of life and sustaining its strategic position.

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?

There is concern that questions 29 and 30 might reveal an Edinburgh bias. By suggesting that Edinburgh would be a single hub this would be at a great disadvantage to Glasgow and the West Coast of Scotland. Moreover, if all connecting services would have to originate in Edinburgh, this would inevitably impact on the services to the North East as network capacity would become over-stretched at Edinburgh Waverley.

We believe that services should not terminate at Edinburgh Waverly for the reasons stated in answer to question 29.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments:

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

We believe that catering facilities should be available on all journeys with the exception of some local services. To this end, we would support proposals for catering on all services in excess of 30 minutes in duration.

We understand that whereas 5% of all journeys to Glasgow stations are in excess of 100km, half of all journeys to Aberdeen are over 100km in length. The facilities available on trains to the North East thus need to better reflect the needs of long-distance travellers.

The franchisee also needs to ensure that rolling stock is capable of operating in wintry and

extreme weather in order to minimise disruption caused to passengers.

Passengers – information, security and services

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

The train network should meet the demands of passengers and recognise the need for improved provision and reliability of 3G mobile phone coverage and free reliable wi-fi. We believe that a longer franchise would encourage greater investment in this area and that priority should be given to long-distance and inter-city services.

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?

We believe that there is some scope for declassifying services or using rolling stock without first-class seating on shorter commuter routes. However, we would not be in favour of operating services without first-class seating on long-distance journeys as this can provide an important source of revenue and can make the train a more attractive option, particularly for business users.

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

Consideration should be given to the number of alcohol-related arrests that are made on the train network and what proportion of the overall number of arrests this constitutes. The public, train guards and other rail staff should also be consulted.

It should be recognised that the vast majority of passengers who consume alcohol on trains do so responsibly. Where existing laws are breached, we support robust enforcement. However, we would not support the banning of the consumption of alcohol on trains.

Nonetheless, we do support the operation of alcohol-free trains for major events, including sporting fixtures.

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?

Yes, the service should continue to be specified by Transport Scotland. Given the economic and social importance the service provides to the northern regions of Scotland, we believe there is a strong case to maintain this support.

While there is scope to improve the service fundamentally the immediate priority should be to maintain existing services while striving to make them commercial and efficient; to the extent that this requires a subsidy this should be provided.

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?

The vital strategic importance of these services to Scotland and the Scottish economy means that the Caledonian Sleeper services represent a unique and special case which requires additional consideration and support.

To this extent whatever best secures the service should be considered. If it is in the interest to separate the franchise along the lines of the West Coast and East Coast mainlines then so be it.

It is essential that the service be secured by whichever mechanism is the most appropriate.

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?

The appeal of the Caledonian Sleeper service is to offer a choice to passengers and greater flexibility, particularly to those who dislike or cannot fly and amid adverse weather conditions.

Speaking as representatives of the North East, the sleeper service provides an important option for both leisure and business travel between Aberdeen and London and southern England. Without a sleeper service the only public transport options would either be to fly or to spend the best part of a day travelling by train.

If Aberdeenshire is to maintain good economic and cultural links with the rest of the UK and with London in particular, it is important that there are as many viable travel options as possible. If flying becomes the only option for business travel to London, disruptions to flights due to the weather or, for example, a repeat of the ash cloud situation, would have a significant detrimental impact to the economy of the region. Aside from this, the Sleeper also offers a better environmental alternative to air travel which should not be overlooked.

The north east of Scotland is the most dynamic growth centre in the UK and of the upmost importance to both the Scottish and UK economies. To this end, communications to and from the region must be maintained.

In relation to the current facilities, there is an argument that subject to practicality and cost, there would be enormous benefit to passengers if ensuite facilities were introduced. As such, it would become a sort of mobile hotel room which would arguably be easier to market, since the vast majority of hotel rooms in the modern era require ensuite facilities as standard.

Anything that Transport Scotland could do to seriously consider the feasibility of providing ensuite services, even in a selected part of the train or for an additional but reasonable increase to the fare for those who wish to take advantage of this facility, should be encouraged.

At present the rolling stock is looking a little tired and would benefit from an upgrade. The

beds are thought by many to be quite narrow so a comprehensive rethink of the layout and proportions of berths would be beneficial. We are encouraged by the UK Government's indication that financial assistance could be made available for the purposes of improving the rolling stock and we would encourage Transport Scotland to continue a meaningful dialogue in this regard.

With respect to the timings of the service, consideration should be given to the current competition faced by flights. On leaving London for Aberdeen, the current timetabled service departs London at 21.15h. The last flight (winter timetable) leaves at 20.15h. While there is some advantage over flight connections it is not significant enough to those in the business community who would wish to attend an important evening function. If the service was to depart from Kings Cross a little later, this would give greater flexibility to remain in central London a little longer to attend later meetings or functions and leave at say, 21.00h in order to catch the train at say, 22.00h which would be more reasonable and convenient. To catch the last flight at 20.15h would require a person to leave central London by around 18.00h. A slightly later service would give a distinct and favourable advantage to the Sleeper service as a result.

Similar consideration might be given in the opposite direction when the last flight leaves at 20.30h, although it should be recognised that the Sleeper leaves slightly later at 21.42h.

For full benefit to be appreciated, the Sleeper service should aim to fit in with passenger's expectations of comfortable rail travel at a timetable to suit.

Environmental issues

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

Carbon emissions targets, waste management and recycling targets and the key environmental themes should be embedded, as planned, within future contracts. The importance of modal shift, for both passengers and freight, should be an integral part of all decision making on the design of the franchise.