

## Richard Mellish

### 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 opinion.

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

Q2 comments: At least 10 years. The lack of "conclusive evidence that longer contracts will increase the level of investment from train operating companies" mainly reflects the lack of opportunity up till now for such evidence to be generated. There is even less evidence in favour of the idea that "mechanisms could be built into a short franchise, such as making allowance for residual asset value, so as to encourage investment from the franchisee".

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

Q3 comments: No opinion.

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

Q4 comments: No opinion.

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

Q5 comments: As suggested in 3.20: where they can provide "enhanced rail services and facilities, provided that these do not adversely impact on the operation of the franchise". The specified period of time should be decided by negotiation, not necessarily short, and not necessarily terminating at the same time as the franchise.

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

Q6 comments: No opinion.

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

Q7 comments: No opinion.

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

Q8 comments: No opinion.

### **Achieving reliability, performance and service quality**

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

Q9 comments: No opinion.

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: Horses for courses.

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

Q11 comments: Provide a formal and effective mechanism for taking account of passenger opinions.

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

Q12 comments: Allow enough recovery time that significantly late arrivals are rare.

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 opinion.

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

Q14 comments: Independent third-party comparisons with trains and stations elsewhere (including outside the UK).

### **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: Incentives to spread the load between peak and off-peak should be pursued further, but overcrowding should be reduced, not increased.

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: By all means facilitate interchanges (e.g. between trains and ferries, which are present are uncoordinated) but **not** at the expense of through services.

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: Government should direct for "social rail", but should only specify minima for the commercially viable services.

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

Q18 comments: No opinion.

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

Q19 comments: No opinion.

### **Scottish rail fares**

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

Q20 comments: No opinion.

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: Government should specify for "social rail" and should set some constraints for commercially viable services.

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: Each route deserves separate consideration. Overall levels should reflect a wide range of issues including social and environmental.

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: Each route deserves separate consideration.

## **Scottish stations**

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

Q24 comments: No opinion on how this should be done, but however it is done it should be repeated whenever circumstances change significantly, such as housing developments.

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: Give careful consideration to the experiences in parts of the UK where community rail partnerships have demonstrated the benefits to all concerned.

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: Horses for courses.

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

Q27 comments: See 25.

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

Q28 comments: No opinion.

## **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 through services should continue. I take the point about the cost implications for the Holyrood Government of the cross-border services running beyond Edinburgh. Clearly those implications should be taken into account in negotiations with the Westminster Government. However they do not deserve to influence service patterns, which should be determined by passengers' needs, overall costs, environmental considerations (notably discouraging air travel and encouraging rail travel) etc.

A possible compromise could be for through train services to be operated by one Franchisee as far as Edinburgh and a different one beyond: there is a precedent on the Thameslink route, with some services currently being shared between First Capital Connect and Southeastern.

No opinion on the division of responsibility between different parts of Government.

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: A very bad idea! Besides the "perceived or actual time penalty in having to change at Edinburgh" there would also be substantial inconvenience, with the layout of Waverley typically involving a long walk between platforms. Unless only lip service is being paid to environmental matters, everything should be directed to making train travel more attractive, not less.

## **Rolling stock**

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

Q31 comments: No suggestions.

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

Q32 comments: Any route with journeys longer than about 30 minutes needs toilets, which need to be kept in working order. The need for provision of food and drink depends on the maximum length of journey and to some extent on the time of day. Longer journeys, particularly around mid-day and in the evening, should have at least some hot food available.

## **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: First priority should be reliable mobile phone access on the routes where it is currently patchy, notably the West Highland. Rather than rely on additional fixed base stations, the possibility of an on-board base station which connects to the outside world by other means (such as satellite) where necessary deserves investigation. Wideband provision is desirable, but should take second place to catering.

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: Where the seating capacity is currently (or will become) insufficient, there need to be appropriate commercial incentives for the franchisee to run longer trains. In most Scotrail trains there is not much first class seating anyway. Replacing it by standard class in the same number of vehicles would make little difference to the total number of seats and would drive away those passengers who are able and willing to pay extra for extra comfort.

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

Q35 comments: The main issue is the balance between the expected benefits and the practicality of enforcement. On most trains consumption of alcohol is not a problem; and on longer journeys many passengers expect to be able to buy food and drink, including alcoholic drinks. Where bad behaviour, fuelled by alcohol, may be an occasional problem, police can be called to arrest the

troublemakers. Only on trains where excessive drinking is expected is a ban justified. Even then, enforcement would seem to depend on either searching every passenger who boards the train or having a sufficient number of police riding on the train for the whole journey.

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

Q36 comments: Improvement is most needed when services are disrupted. At those times, the greatest need is to ensure the provision of information to platform and train staff accurately and rapidly, so that they can pass it on.

Wrong operation of GPS-triggered on-board information systems (e.g. stating that the train is approaching a station which it has in fact just left, or just passed without stopping) needs to be investigated and prevented.

### **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: The sleeper service is as much a matter of general public interest as other services. Therefore at least something similar to the present service should be specified, though the franchisee could be allowed some flexibility on some of the details.

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: No opinion.

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: Clearly the appeal is to be able to make a long journey with little waste of daytime. I see no great need for earlier or later trains, except that, on the Lowlander (which starts late and arrives early) it would be desirable to have the option of boarding a bit earlier in the evening and having



a later breakfast call and a later time by which we have to leave our berths.

The present pattern with the Highlander serving three final destinations and many intermediate stations makes good sense. I understand that there used to be a service to Oban, which presumably was withdrawn because of insufficient custom. If surveys suggest that there might in future be significant potential custom for Oban, a train or bus connection from Crianlarich would be a better solution than diverting the Fort William service.

Better provision for passengers travelling to/from places other than London is desirable, and could be achieved by routing the trains via Birmingham and providing a stop at least at New Street, plus possibly Wolverhampton, Birmingham International, Coventry or Rugby.

Apropos the statement in 11.9 that "the level of accommodation provided falls short of the expectations of today's passenger": although improvements would of course be welcome, the accommodation is already surely a lot better than could be provided in the "sleeper bus" services that 11.7 suggests as an alternative.

Provision of en-suite accommodation is not essential but is certainly desirable, in some cabins at a higher fare. The "technical challenges in water and power supply" cannot be great, because such accommodation already exists on some overnight trains in other countries, such as the City Night Line services in Europe.

Because of the great changes in circumstances since Motorail services were withdrawn (particularly increased car ownership, increased fuel prices, and increased environmental concerns) it is now time for them to be re-introduced, at least between London and Glasgow and/or Edinburgh. Provision of suitable rolling stock should not be problematic, considering the current extent of rail transportaion of new cars.

## **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: Numbers of journeys made by train that would previously have been made by road or by air.

Also, although the consultation document seems to be concerned exclusively with passenger travel, someone in Scotland should be promoting diversion of freight from road to rail (and not the opposite, as seems to have happened to timber traffic).