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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:

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

Q2 comments: The possibility of constitutional changes will have to be factored in when deciding on franchise length. It might be possible to combine the best aspects of longer and shorter franchises by having a number of review points on a long franchise, allowing both parties the chance to review performance and progress and, if deemed necessary, terminate the contract.

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?

Q9 comments: Human nature responds better when there are carrots as well as sticks! Note that incentives need not be large financial ones to chief executives. Small bonuses to all staff for good performance would be much better received by the general public and the vast majority of staff in the current economic climate.

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: It would make more sense to split up the performance regime rather than just have one system, so good performance in one area is recognised, rather than submerged beneath poor performances elsewhere.

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

Q11 comments: Keep on seeking out and responding to passengers' comments and complaints. You need to ensure you get a lot of feedback so that it properly reflects the opinions of the general public, rather than a few highly opinionated people, so make it really easy for people to have their say. This form, with a large quantity of jargon, is actually quite off-putting.

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: You need both quality management systems and inspectors. The inspectors can then spot-check the self-assessment and grade the services and stations accordingly. Inspectors' reports should be published and publicised in the local media, in a similar way to that for schools.

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

Q14 comments: I know Trip Advisor has its faults, but looking at the overall level of comments about a particular hotel you can get a pretty accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Could something similar be set up for public transport in general?

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: It is very hard to be standing for ages in Standard Class when there are empty seats in First Class. A significant proportion of commuter trains into London have little or no First Class seating so as to maximise the passenger capacity. It seems wrong for the few to have their gilt-edged comforts protected at the expense of the majority who are having to play sardines in Standard Class. So think seriously about getting rid of First Class on commuter services and others with very high passenger demand.

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: Direct services with a reasonable number of intermediate stops are always useful. Most passengers prefer to have the absolute minimum number of changes during their journey. Having to sit for two minutes at a station while other people get on and off is no bother to most fair-minded people. Having to make multiple changes to get to one's destination is, and that is when taking the car becomes a lot more tempting. For example, travelling to Cambridge from Leuchars used to mean just one change at Peterborough. Now we have to change twice (York and Peterborough). If all cross-border services have to start from Edinburgh then that will mean three changes.

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: All those who are paying for services have the right to have a say in what services are provided. So both the government and customers should be consulted. Customer demand is not just a matter of seeing what customers do now (which will, of course, be limited by what is provided) – you need to consult us (without jargon).

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

Q18 comments:

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:

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:

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:

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:

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?

Q27 comments:

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: Yes, cross-border services must continue to go north of Edinburgh. Firstly, all the East Coast and Cross Country services I have used have been pretty much packed (if you don't book in advance and reserve your seats then you are almost certain to have to stand for much of the journey) so I am surprised about the comment about spare capacity on these trains. This may be the case sometimes on the section north of Dundee, but by the time the East Coast southbound trains have left Leuchars at 9.20 or 11.20 they are pretty full, with hardly a seat left at all by Kirkcaldy.

Secondly, as a passenger and mother of two primary aged children, I really do not like changing trains except where absolutely necessary. My parents live in Romford. We visit them several times a year, and they come up to visit us too. Sometimes we go by car (especially in the summer months), sometimes

by train (usually in the winter). The existing rail journey takes about seven hours, and involves two changes at the London end (including bumping the suitcases around the London Underground). If we had to change at Edinburgh too then it would start to seem a bit much for us to do in a day. When returning home we usually take the 14.00 from Kings Cross which arrives in Leuchars at about 19.40. That is late enough for primary age children to be getting home. My elderly parents would not relish having the extra time and bother involved with taking cases on and off trains twice just for the convenience of the holder of the ScotRail franchise.

Recently we had to attend my father-in-law's funeral in Sheffield. It was scheduled for mid-morning on a Friday. I collected the children at the end of the school day on the Thursday and got them onto the 16.18 train. With one change at Doncaster we reached our hotel in Sheffield by 21.30 – late for our children, but not impossibly so. If we had had to change at Edinburgh too then the children would have had to miss a significant amount of time at school on the Thursday as well as the Friday.

Thirdly, direct train services from Aberdeen, Dundee, Leuchars and Kirkcaldy to a wide range of English cities (not just London) help to ensure that Aberdeen, Dundee and pretty much the whole of Fife are not seen as some unimportant backwaters compared to Edinburgh and Glasgow.

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: The benefits would be solely for the Scotrail franchisee and the various outlets at Edinburgh Waverley station. They would not benefit passengers in a direct sense at all.

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?

Q32 comments:

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: It is very hard to be standing for ages in Standard Class when there are empty seats in First Class. A significant proportion of commuter trains into London have little or no First Class seating so as to maximise the passenger capacity. It seems wrong for the few to have their gilt-edged comforts protected at the expense of the majority who are having to play sardines in Standard Class. So think seriously about getting rid of First Class on commuter services and others with very high passenger demand.

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

Q35 comments: Banning drunks on trains is more of an issue.

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:

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:

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:

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: