

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

Muir of Ord (Tarradale) Community Council

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

/

Group/Organisation

Please tick as appropriate

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

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

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(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?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(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?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes

No

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:

Far North and Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh services are likely to require the protection of the proposed social rail element.

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

Q2 comments:

The contract term should be long enough for the franchisee to be able to engage in new station opening projects, even when these take many years to bring to fruition, as in the case of Beaulieu (open and very successful) and Conon Bridge (still not started after years of discussion).

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:

Every effort should be made to consult with local communities and their associations where possible with issues that would concern them. However, this is not required for the every day to day operation of passenger rail services.

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:

As well as penalising poor performance, good performance should be incentivised, which will encourage the franchisee to provide reliable, punctual and improved rail services.

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:

The performance regime should reflect the variations in routes and services provided across Scotland e.g. inner-city commutes and rural routes serving remote communities. Considerations should be made to routes which include onward travel to other forms of transport.

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

Q11 comments:

Specifically for commuter services, it is very undesirable to slow down the published timetable (so as to ensure a higher proportion of services arrive to time) as this reduces the competitiveness of rail services where road is the main competitor.

Further to this consultation, more steps should be taken to understand passenger issues e.g. surveying rail users (online or on-journey).

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

Q12 comments:

Fast journey time, especially to town and city centres, is a key advantage of rail services over other modes, especially for commuting, and should not be disincentivised.

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:

For commuter services, such as those between Inverness and Muir of Ord, standing beyond the first stop (Beauly, which is 14 minutes from Inverness) would not be acceptable. 15 minutes would be an acceptable limit.

On Far North and Kyle line services, cycle carrying capacity is a limiting factor, especially in the tourist season when tourists (typically making long distance journeys and typically booked on) clash with commuters (typically travelling only a few stops and typically not able to book).

Allowing train staff more flexibility to accommodate cycles would alleviate this issue in the short term, but the design of future rolling stock needs to allow for growing demand for cycle-commuting.

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:

Journeys from North of Inverness to the Central Belt already involve at least one change, at Inverness, usually followed by further changes at Perth or Stirling. Further interchanges between Inverness and Edinburgh/Glasgow would not be desirable.

Journeys beyond Glasgow/Edinburgh already typically entail changes at Inverness, at Perth/Stirling and at Edinburgh/Glasgow. Again, further changes would not make rail more attractive as compared to road.

The more interchanges there are on a journey the more likely the journey is to be disrupted if there are problems en route (especially where there is single-line working).

Timetabling can be an issue where there is inadequate time between arrival and departure to switch services for continued travel at Inverness. For example the 1742 from Edinburgh arriving at 2102 in Inverness, allows 7 minutes before the train to Tain departs at 2109.

Interchanges from rail to other modes of transport or passengers continued travel destinations should be considered when timetabling, especially those used for tourism but this should not have an impact on the amount of direct services already provided.

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 for the next ScotRail franchise?

Q18 comments:

The contract should protect the highly valued Highland Rail Card scheme which allows price differentiation between tourists (who are not eligible) and local residents (who are). This scheme effectively provides regular user discounts to rail users who do not commute frequently enough to use Flexi pass or who make journeys to destinations other than Inverness.

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:

Modal change towards rail away from road use, both for regular travellers and for tourists. Therefore fares should be more affordable than travelling by car.

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:

Increased fares could be applied where an extra service is provided which goes over and above what is normally expected (or already provided) when travelling by train. Necessary enhancements or those which are standard should not affect fares.

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:

Commuter travel in the Inverness area is not time flexible – travel to work depends on shift hours, travel to college on class times.

The availability of off-peak services is currently the limiting factor for off-peak journeys, particularly the long gap in the mid-afternoon which means that college students and shift workers, particularly in the tourism sector, are unable to use the train for their return journey.

It seems unlikely that differential pricing would lead to any shift to the off-peak in the Inverness area. It is more important for pricing policy to aim at attracting rail travellers from road.

In addition any possible difference in fare prices should not affect the price of Season tickets or Flexi passes, which are commonly used by commuters. A strategy to encourage people to switch to travelling off-peak should target casual travellers (for leisure or tourism) who do not use the services as regularly as commuters and are not limited (as already stated). This should also alleviate the problem of overcrowding or the need to stand on peak journeys.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:

In the north, the prime consideration should be improving exploitation of existing services by increasing loading and so justifying a complete timetable.

Timetable integration with local bus services (which are in some cases even less frequent than rail services) is essential if train loading is to be

improved; the two need either to feed one another, or complement one another by covering the gaps in the respective timetables – neither of which is achieved at present.

There should be adequate support from the local community when opening or closing a station. Encouraging passengers to use public transport and promoting a sustainable environment should be considered when determining.

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:

The current regime leads to ludicrously high costs and incredibly long delays.

For example, the re-opened station at Beaulieu is a short platform on a single track, on the site of a closed station, with no signalling, but still took nearly a decade to complete. A similar project for Conon Bridge has been stuck in its planning stage for nearly as long.

Any changes to the regime must be to reduce cost and speed up projects.

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:

By running rail services throughout the day, and offering fares which are competitive with other modes.

Railways should engage in community led events or initiatives such as celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Railway coming to Muir of Ord.

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

Q28 comments:

Secure cycle storage is vital at all stations; to be attractive to cycle tourists or cycle commuters it is important that a free place is effectively guaranteed, which means a level of over-provision such that lockers are almost never all in use.

Categories of stations should reflect its usage and its needs. For stations used by commuters e.g. Muir of Ord, information boards, shelter, car parking, and secure cycle storage is essential. A shop or staffing would not necessary be required in view of its distance from Dingwall or Inverness stations which have these facilities. As railway stations can often be the first stop for tourists; effort should be made with Visit Scotland (or other organisations) to include tourist information at certain stations.

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:

The single daily direct service from Inverness to south of Edinburgh is highly valued, as it provides the only service with genuinely long-distance rolling stock and with catering suitable for a journey of this length.

In the absence of even this one service, rail travel to destinations south of Edinburgh would be extremely unattractive as compared to air services from Inverness, both for business travel and for leisure.

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:

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:

There should be facilities for cycles, adequate seating and safe standing areas for busy journeys. Toilets and a catering service (and Wi-Fi) should be provided on longer distances.

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:

Long distance journeys and those used for business commutes should be a priority.

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 first-class services are commercially viable, additional seating capacity could instead be provided by increasing the total capacity of the service, either with longer trains or with higher frequencies.

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:

Sleeper services should be specified, although many of the details can be left to the operating company.

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 FortWilliam, 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 Inverness – London sleeper is highly valued; however the gradually deteriorating condition of the stock makes the service less attractive than it should be.

The service is currently price-competitive for business travel, and if the old and tired feel can be updated without a significant price rise, may remain so.

Even now the service is not viable for family leisure travel – for example a family with three young children will need to book six berths together; for two adults and three children to go to London this way is prohibitively expensive and they cannot easily make use of marginal pricing schemes such as Bargain Berths.

En-suite facilities, with the considerable environmental impact that would entail, are unlikely to be justified.

The showers and other facilities available to first class passengers at Euston are a good substitute for en-suite facilities, though currently poorly advertised, and in the event that services move to another London terminal it is important that equivalent facilities are available there.

The current departure time from Inverness is acceptable; a later start would be preferable, but an earlier one would be unacceptable. Connections from the north to this train are obviously important.

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:

Modal shift and reduction in the carbon footprint per passenger kilometre across all modes, not just on rail, should be key considerations for Government.