

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

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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

General comment

The big disappointment about this document is its lack of vision. It seems to accept a UK Government-dictated status quo – a system that has poured money into a black hole since the industry was privatised and has resulted in the highest rail fares in Europe and some of the poorest services. It is accepted that the current financial circumstances are a severe constraint on any improvement, but at a time of constitutional change, we should at least be able to look forward to a national transport strategy which is in line with the Scottish Government's Strategic Priorities. A start could be made by the cancellation of the Aberdeen City Bypass and reallocation of those funds to public transport priorities, such as main line electrification to Aberdeen.

Those of us in the Highlands and Islands are in a condition of transport deprivation. Public transport, especially in the Highland mainland, is dire. This makes us largely car-dependant, yet our motor fuel is currently at least 12p a litre (or 60p a gallon) more expensive than the central belt, due to blatantly unfair and monopolistic trading practices that Governments refuse to address. Connectivity within, to and from our region is needed more than ever in order to allow us to contribute to the national economy. Yet we are clearly regarded as a bit of an inconvenience rather than as an integral part of the nation. The same impression is gained from the Government's parallel consultation on ferry services.

There have undoubtedly been great improvements to rail services in the Edinburgh – Glasgow corridor, but the one development that could have benefitted the whole nation, GARL, was the one to be axed. There has been nothing for those of us in the north, except the threat of cuts, and continuation of a branch-line style of service on our inter-city routes.

Transport is the Scottish Government's weak link, and someone needs to get a grip.

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: This is a very risky approach which could lead to further fragmentation and much poorer services for the so-called social element in

rural areas.

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

Q2 comments: The 2014 franchise should be as short as possible in the hope of constitutional change bringing about a different model of service provision. The franchise model, with separately owned and managed infrastructure, has proved to be deeply flawed. It has required in real terms three times the subsidy of the nationalised railway while providing a service for the passenger that is the most expensive in Europe, and falling far behind our European neighbours in terms of reliability, resilience and basic amenity for passengers.

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

Q3 comments: Given the fatal flaws within the franchising system which, for example, allowed National Express to walk away from the East Coast franchise with minimal penalty and no effect on its other franchises, the basis of the franchise should be kept as simple as possible, with a view to a more rational system being adopted as soon as possible. Therefore the franchise should be for the operation of the service as specified by the Scottish Government, as it is the taxpayer who takes the risk anyway.

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

Q4 comments: As above. A profit sharing mechanism could well incentivise the franchisee to cut costs in ways disadvantageous to the passenger, such as increasing overcrowding.

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

Q5 comments: Community rail partnerships could bring benefits to a number of rural routes such as those north and west of Inverness. A degree of funding could be diverted to them through, for example, transfer of responsibility for stations.

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

Q6 comments: The incentive should be to supply the service according to specification, with penalties for failure to deliver.

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

Q7 comments: Clearly the kind of situation referred to above with National

Express must not be allowed to happen again.

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

Q8 comments: Failure to deliver should ultimately result in early termination of the franchise.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Good performance should be expected as a matter of course and the franchise should specify high standards of delivery, and of course poor performance should be penalised.

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: One franchise, one performance regime, no excuses.

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

Q11 comments: As above.

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

Q12 comments: It should be possible to devise a robust and resilient working timetable to address and balance these issues.

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: As all of the above.

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

Q14 comments: Common sense?

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: Ten minutes permitted standing time is a myth and people are having to stand far longer. Overcrowding is built in to the service specification. Standing on long-distance services is not acceptable at all, but may be tolerable for up to twenty minutes on inner-city commuter routes. There needs to be a limit to numbers standing per carriage for safety reasons, and this is something that has never been addressed pre- or post- privatisation.

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: There are no opportunities, nor is it clear what is meant here. Which though services would be curtailed and where would people be required to change? Perth is very often a changing point for those travelling between Inverness and the central belt. This is a grim experience, thanks to the wanton neglect of this once magnificent railway station. There should be more through services, not fewer. In the case of Inverness services this could easily be done by joining or dividing trains at Perth (very simple with modern rolling stock). Changing trains is very unpopular, especially with elderly or less able passengers, those with children and with luggage. Interchange with other modes is notoriously unreliable. It is apparently not even possible to integrate the three trains per day with ferry services at Oban. Governments are always on about “integrated public transport” but integration between modes gets worse instead of better.

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: When passengers start to get referred to as customers, look out! There is no guarantee of a profit-orientated operator being driven by “customer” demand unless it benefits the bottom line. Minimum levels of service must be specified by the franchiser.

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

Q18 comments: The Scottish Government should be specific in the level of service to be provided, and the contract should be flexible enough to vary the requirements to meet changes in demand during the period of the franchise.

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

Q19 comments: As above.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Fares policy must be based on affordability and fairness, and must incentivise use of spare capacity. At present fares seem to be designed to discourage use. For example the single fare Kyle of Lochalsh – Inverness (pre-January increase) is a staggering £19.30. What is the point of that when there is ample capacity except in the summer peak, and when fare box revenue covers such a low proportion of costs? The privatised railway was supposed to encourage use yet the reverse is the case. A £5 fare would make a lot more sense as it would encourage year-round use of the resource that we are all paying for. Incidentally, the equivalent bus fare is £19.20, which is highly suggestive of cartel pricing and should be investigated.

Examples such as the above suggest that a national fares policy is not appropriate. Routes to and within the Highlands should be priced such as to assist employment, economic growth and tourism, bearing in mind the cost of alternative modes; e.g. motor fuel 12p per litre more costly than the central belt.

We already have, in the UK, the most expensive rail fares in Europe and there is absolutely no scope for increases.

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: All fares should be regulated, based on affordability and fairness. Where fares contribute only a small proportion towards operating costs, they should be reduced to nominal levels (see above example). Where fares are deregulated the privatised operators will resort to bare-faced extortion. One example of this is the unregulated bus fare from Kyle of Lochalsh to Broadford (9.45 miles) which is £8 one way. That's eight pounds that has to be found by a low-paid worker or student. Please don't fall into this trap on our railways.

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: Clearly there is a balance to be struck. Most users would

say that fares are already expensive, and to many people, unaffordable. We have in the UK the highest rail fares in Europe and some of the poorest services. This is due to the wasteful fragmentation of the industry and the inefficiency of the franchise model of service procurement. If the government wishes to reduce car use there must be incentives to encourage switching of modes. Charging extra for enhanced services would be counter-productive. For example the superb new Airdrie – Bathgate line is intended to improve economic prospects and access to employment in a deprived area of the country. These welcome initiatives will only have effect if people can afford to use them.

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: People do not travel in the peak for fun. If you try to price out peak use it merely forces the low-paid to use other modes, or even means they can no longer afford to go to work. As for 'helping encourage' people to travel off-peak (what an Orwellian use of language that is!), they do not need encouragement. People will travel off-peak if they can.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: There may be a case for closing some very lightly used stations but only if that results in accelerated journey times and overall benefits to users of the line. I am thinking for example of the Kyle of Lochalsh line where timings are hardly improved since the age of steam. It might be acceptable to close such as Lochluichart, Achanalt, Achnashellach, Attadale, Duncraig and Duirinish as part of an investment in line speed improvements to bring the Kyle – Inverness journey time down to two hours. Anyone who lives in these places needs access to a car anyway and none of these is particularly far from an alternative station. The same would apply on the Far North line. It would be necessary to show that the benefits of such closures outweighed any disadvantages.

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: Surely to be encouraged.

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: The split between operations and infrastructure has, in every respect, been wasteful and inefficient. It is an absolute nonsense, and merely another cash-extracting mechanism, to have the operator leasing stations from Network Rail.

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

Q27 comments: Hand over these assets to local communities, if they can come up with a business plan which ensures sustainable development and beneficial use. (This would apply mainly to rural stations.)

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

Q28 comments: People want to see staff at stations wherever possible. These need not necessarily be employees of the railway operator, but could be people who live or have businesses in station premises, who are given a contract to, for example, sell tickets and refreshments, and clean the station.

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: Clearly the agenda is to axe these services. Users should not be made to suffer from the absurd ORCATS apparatus and it is the job of politicians and civil servants to sort out this kind of nonsense. There is not sufficient capacity on services north of Edinburgh to absorb passengers from cross-border services and curtailing all services at Edinburgh would simply force passengers on to other modes.

Here is an innovative alternative: taking advantage of open access rules, the Scottish Government should specify services from Inverness, Glasgow and Aberdeen to King's Cross as part of the Scotrail franchise and thus use ORCATS to raid East Coast revenue!

It is puzzling when the Scottish Government calls for HS2 to be extended into Scotland while at the same time seeking to deprive the north-east and Highlands of cross-border services. The whole of Scotland needs connectivity with England and Europe.

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: I cannot think of any benefits that would arise from being forced to change trains at Edinburgh. Slower journey times, even more overcrowding, suburban-style trains for inter-city journeys – benefits? What benefits?

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: As long as the franchising system persists, I suppose that we're stuck with the ROSCOs (another of the many cash-extracting mechanisms that make the railway so much more expensive than it should be). However, we should be looking towards a Scottish solution to rolling stock provision, which would supply proper inter-city trains for long-distance journeys within the country, perhaps even re-establishing a train building factory in Springburn.

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

Q32 comments: Scotland drew the short straw pre-privatisation when it was allocated to the Provincial Services network, managed from Birmingham. This meant that our inter-city routes were provided with poor-quality, branch line style trains like the Class 158s and Class 170s. (The 158s were described by a BR traction engineer as "garden shed engineering". They're not even that good – just look in the toilets!) These trains are totally inadequate for journeys of any distance and should be replaced as soon as possible. They are cramped, uncomfortable and lacking in luggage space, and they cannot operate in the sort of winter weather conditions that have always been to be expected in Scotland. The only trains of inter-city standard that we have running in Scotland are the cross-border services running beyond Edinburgh (the ones you want to do away with!). While we have to put up with such poor quality trains on long distance journeys, the Class 67 locomotives that work the sleeper trains north of Edinburgh stand idle all day at Aberdeen, Inverness and Fort William. In a rational system, these would be working daytime trains of Mk.3 stock (plenty of that standing idle too in various places) to and from Glasgow and Edinburgh.

All trains on our inter-city routes should have, as a minimum, a seat (with a bit of legroom) for every passenger regardless of time of day or time of year, adequate luggage space, sufficient toilets, quiet areas, catering facilities and seats aligned with windows. Obviously it will take time and investment to reverse twenty years of neglect of passengers' needs on routes going north of the central belt.

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: I wouldn't be investing any money at all on these things. Mobile phones work on most of the network, and an advantage of train travel is that it sometimes allows one to work, read or sleep with fewer distractions.

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: First class provision might be all right if trains had sufficient space, but currently they don't. It is intolerable to have first class seats if second class passengers have to stand.

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

Q35 comments: It would be unreasonable to penalise the majority for the behaviour of an anti-social minority, who would probably not behave much better even if they could not overtly consume alcohol on the train. There are all sorts of anti-social behaviour on public transport. I once spent three hours on a train next to two people who played every tune and ring tone on their mobile phones ad nauseam. The conductor could not, or would not, do anything about it.

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

Q36 comments: By doing away with the irritating and repetitive automated announcements on trains.

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: Well! Thank goodness (on this issue only!) that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is a Highland MP and a sleeper user. A year-round sleeper service would never be provided on a purely commercial basis. It needs to be recognised that sleepers and other cross-border services are our links with Europe as well as with England. When the Channel Tunnel was built we were promised direct services to Europe. The trains were purchased but never went into service. Scotland's direct ferry service to Europe has also been lost. So the sleepers (and other cross-border services from the north) are our only surface connection with England and Europe. The consultation mentions things like sleeper bus services as an alternative. Will Scottish Ministers and civil servants be travelling on sleeper buses? There are serious questions of safety and reliability around overnight long-distance bus services. The alternative to sleeper trains is to fly, and that's the choice.

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: If the sleepers are contracted separately it would need to be with an operator sufficiently resourced to operate a complex long-distance service with a variety of Scottish destinations. The problem is that the privatised structure has left the sleeper services as an anomaly in rail operating terms requiring dedicated resources that were formerly pooled with other services. I once wakened on a sleeper train expecting to be approaching Euston, only to find we were in Carlisle. The locomotive had failed, and no replacement could be found – *at Carlisle, still a major railway centre!* That is the way it is on our privatised and balkanised rail network. So any new franchise arrangement must not make things even worse in terms of service reliability and resilience.

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: There is effectively no rail alternative to the sleepers from the north. The alternative from Inverness or Aberdeen is to fly. Given that it now appears that the sleepers are to continue, it does make sense to consider their destinations. Inverness is obviously important, and its service should remain as is. The Aberdeen train could actually continue to Inverness providing a service for the substantial population centres en route, and this could also bring operational benefits in bringing the rolling stock back to its servicing base. Oban is an interesting idea, and of course had a sleeper service until the 1960s. It could offer connections to the variety of ferry destinations served. However, it is debatable whether sufficient rail infrastructure remains at Oban to handle such a service. Another alternative would be to extend the Fort William service to/from Mallaig, providing a service for Skye, but here also the track infrastructure has largely been destroyed and may prevent any development. Either of these options would bring substantial tourism benefits and might improve loadings.

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: No comments.

