

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 It sounds unnecessarily complicated and there is a danger the social low profit making part would be unattractive even with subsidy, whereas by offering franchises as a whole, the operator would have to take the 'rough with the smooth'.

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

Q2 Presumably if an operator is being asked to make capital injections, then the franchise period needs to be long enough for this to be practical and viable to do so.

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: There should be quarterly reviews and failure to meet franchise commitments should result in loss of the franchise mid term

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Both

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: Actual routes or service groups

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

Q11 comments: Take passenger complaints seriously and make that part of the franchise commitment and performance targeting

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:

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: Most operators in the south are reducing standing times – this seems to work

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: Does it have to be one or the other? Can there not be communication and mutual agreement based on customer feedback?

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: to encourage more use of the rail system – rail fares should not be artificially increased to make passenger numbers fit the capacity – rather capacity should be expanded to fit passenger numbers. Rail travel should always be substantially cheaper than air travel, coach travel or car travel (because it is greener and the operating costs should also reflect the lower unit costs per passenger carried)

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: For some areas it may be necessary to subsidise fares due to the lower populations and consequent lower usage, in order to make rail travel competitive with the alternatives.

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: Rail fares should always be pitched to be more competitive than other forms of transport. Where this occurs naturally (ie there is sufficient passenger uptake to make it viable – no subsidy should be needed. Those routes which do not carry viable passenger numbers would need social subsidy

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 The difference should be whatever discount it takes to make off-peak passenger numbers viable for the operator. For commuters and some business travellers there may not be an option to travel off peak – particularly over the longer distances eg from Highlands to Central Belt or London, so it makes sense to pitch off peak fares at sufficient discount to persuade all other travellers to utilise off-peak where they are free to do so eg leisure travellers, pensioners etc

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: Most definitely YES. Travel from the Highlands is already very restricted (No central London flights – only Gatwick for example). No-one travelling from Highlands wants to have to decant at Edinburgh and trundle luggage around between platforms. It would also add further delay to the time it takes to travel to and from the Highlands as sufficient transfer times would have to be built in (and allowance made in train connections for delays particularly in Winter). A straight-through service removes all those hassles and delays for the traveller. Have in mind too that services from Edinburgh to Inverness are very infrequent, so a missed connection could result in several hours delay to the journey. A seamless cross-border service is essential for the long distance Highland traveller and those travelling from the South to the Highlands

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 Highlands perspective is that an Edinburgh Hub would be a disaster for long distance travel – through services must be continued at all cost or rail will cease to be a viable option for those travelling to and from Highlands.

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: Adequate number of working Toilets. On long distance trains a buffet service (or at very least refreshments trolley).

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: Low 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:

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

Q35 comments: Sad that abuse by a few always results in inconvenience for the many. In the days of a guard on trains they would deal with any unruly behaviour. Presumably it is not much of an issue except on 'football' trains. Perhaps the answer then is to have sufficient transport police travelling with the train rather than a blanket ban.

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: The Inverness sleeper service is an essential one and should be specified.

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: Does not matter so long as a good reliable and reasonably priced sleeper service is maintained

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: The appeal to me of sleeper service is to be able to leave Inverness or London and arrive refreshed and ready to start a full day. All the boredom of a long distance journey evaporates if one can sleep through it. It delivers you from City to City (air travel from Inverness means Gatwick at the other end and further travel onward).

Inverness is also a prime holiday destination and many folk from the South (and those from abroad) choose this service. It is a very important business, leisure and tourist facility which would leave Inverness very poorly served by its absence.

There is often some difficulty if travelling alone as one can end up sharing with a complete stranger. For one like me who can snore like a buzz saw, it can be of concern for the fellow traveller who is subjected to it. The only single berths are 1st class and much more expensive. The continental two tier sleepers seem to get around this problem . Otherwise, the current facilities are just fine and although the rolling stock is very old, it is usually reasonably serviceable. I do not think en-suite berths are necessary, but more single (affordable) berths would be useful.

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: