

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: I think that the current arrangement is most suitable. Lines north of the central belt are always going to need a bigger subsidy than other more heavily used lines.

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

Q2 comments: A longer contract would encourage the franchisee to invest in more rolling stock and possibly better and more frequent services.

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

Q3 comments: No view on this.

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

Q4 comments: The train operator should be given an agreed share of profit up to a certain point, then an increased share beyond this to encourage increased passenger numbers. However fare increases should be controlled to prevent this being made easy for the train operator.

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

Q5 comments: Third parties should mainly consist of customer bodies such as passenger groups and freight users.

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

Q6 comments: A carrot and stick approach should be used. Heavy fines for poor results that aren't due to outside problems such as weather, vandalism, cable theft etc. Bonus payments paid on an increasing scale for beating agreed targets. However targets should not be made "easy" for the train operator e.g. increasing journey time to make target easier to achieve.

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

Q7 comments: No view on this.

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

Q8 comments: A rolling franchise could be used as an incentive e.g. a ten year franchise with a further five year extension if an agreed set of targets are met.

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: One system for the whole of Scotland. The current train operator has done a lot to improve the performance and appeal of rail travel in Scotland. Breaking up the network could encourage an operator to concentrate on some routes at the expense of others.

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

Q11 comments: Have representatives of passenger groups and ordinary members of the public sit in with the train operators when setting time tables.

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

Q12 comments: Journey time should be the main performance driver.

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: Yes. All aspects. There has been a marked improvement in station cleanliness, information and availability of staff at many of the stations I have used on the ScotRail network in the last few years.

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

Q14 comments: No view on this.

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: The current 10 minutes is fine on most services except some on the busy Glasgow-Edinburgh main line and the Fife Circle routes.

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: I am sure this would put people off using train services, especially if they are travelling with young children or heavy luggage.

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: A minimum level of service should be dictated by government/local councils with additional services added by the franchisee.

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

Q18 comments: No view on this.

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

Q19 comments: Increased profits for better targets and heavier penalties for failures.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Off peak fares should be kept as this is a good way to spread passenger journeys away from peak times. Trains travelling without bums on seats should have special fare offers as a way to encourage more passengers. Better to have a 100% full train with 50% fares than 30%

capacity at 100% fares.

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 internal travel within Scotland should be regulated. Intercity travel where competition is with airlines should be on a commercial basis.

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: The current RPI+1% is fair. Taxpayers may be paying a higher amount in subsidy than is taken in by ticket sales but road users are benefitting by less congestion on our roads.

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: The current set up is fine. I am speaking from experience here as I always try to travel off-peak if possible.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: A hot potato. Reduce the number of stations in Glasgow and people have to walk further. In many cases they would opt for a bus or use their car. I can't see that it costs that much to keep a station open in Glasgow as many of them are pretty basic. I have travelled to Glasgow a number of times in the last year and always get a through ticket to the nearest station. This is part of the appeal of travelling by train from Edinburgh to Glasgow. In rural areas why not promote the stations more. For instance who knows what attractions are to be found getting off a train at Corrour, apart from hill walkers and fishermen.

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: This is a good idea which is very common south of the border. Local authorities, especially, know what the demand for rail travel is

likely to be and can encourage integrated transport too.

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 current set-up is working well with a marked improvement in most of the stations I have visited in the last few years.

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

Q27 comments: Offering unused station buildings to community groups to be used as tea rooms, libraries, shops etc would be good. The current adopted station arrangement works well too. See Cupar as a good example of this.

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

Q28 comments: Basic toilet facilities at most town stations would be a start.

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. I realise some people say that ScotRail is losing passengers on this. I would beg to differ as it encourages passengers with the extra services available. I have travelled to Aberdeen and Montrose recently and on each journey travelled ScotRail and East Coast as it fitted in with my plans. Otherwise I may have been forced to travel by car.

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: No. No one getting on a train at Aberdeen/Inverness/Aberdeen wants to change in Edinburgh or Glasgow. This would encourage more people onto aeroplanes.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: A lot is spent on extending platforms (The Fife circle is a recent example of this). Why not consider double deck trains as they have on the continent? See Rail magazine issues 683 and 684 for example of train that could run on current track. Leasing rolling stock is widely used in other areas of the UK. I'm not convinced this is better than outright purchase as rolling stock can last for 40 years or more.

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

Q32 comments: Toilets, areas for bikes and pushchairs. Trolley service on longer routes.

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: Not a high priority. I am sure most people would rather get to their destination on time. Having said that, I have seen people using laptops and especially mobiles on most of the journeys I make and they don't seem to have any problems with signal. It may be more of a problem on the highland lines. Cost v returns in increased passenger numbers would have to be asked on these lines.

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 on long distance only.

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

Q35 comments: This is an excellent idea. On more than one occasion my journey (usually made with young children) has been spoiled with spilt beer on floors, empty cans on seats and drunks on trains. 100% behind a total ban.

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

Q36 comments: It's pretty good just now. Up to date web information would

help as many people access this from mobiles now.

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: A controversial one this. If it was left to a train operator then I think the service would reduce and prices would rise. The subsidy for this service isn't too much in the bigger picture of things.

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: It should remain as it is.

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: I have never had the need or opportunity to use this service. Therefore I do not feel in a position to pass fair comment on it.

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: A reduction in diesel trains sitting idling in stations such as Waverley would help.