

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 seems extremely complicated and outside the central belt could be unworkable e.g. some services on the Edinburgh-Aberdeen-Inverness route being economic and some social/environmental in focus

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

Q2 comments: Long enough to ensure that investment in up to date trains and station infrastructure is achieved. Short franchises would not achieve this – need more something more like 20 years.

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

Q3 comments: This needs to be fair to all parties, and in particular protect the franchisee against consequences of government or network rail operator policy changes.

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

Q4 comments: Fair and flexible to account for changes during the period of the franchise – perhaps a 5-yearly review.

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

Q5 comments: Options should be available for both parties to introduce reasonable additional services provided by third parties.

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

Q6 comments: Outcome to the customers – keep it simple.

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

Q7 comments: the minimum to ensure that the company is serious, but not to generate costs and legal wrangles and consequent costs.

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

Q8 comments: Make the contract profitable for the franchisee.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Priority should be in incentivising good performance.

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 overall system and targets with some allowance made for services where there are initial problems.

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

Q11 comments: Ask customers?

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

Q12 comments: Both them and the customer experience (from ticket purchase to overcrowding, poor comfort and services in the train) are all important. A composite measure is required as they do conflict with each other.

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: They are all inter-related so they need to be considered together.

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

Q14 comments: For stations, whether the managers are enforcing the no-smoking areas of the stations! Trains need to have seating which is comfortable and not showing excessive wear and tear.

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 problem is not train capacity but track capacity, The permitted standing time should not be increased.

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: Interchange stations from rail to bus are essential in many parts of Scotland but this is very poorly managed e.g. Perth. However this can only be done by the government (local and national), not by the franchisees.

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: both need to be involved – much is a “chicken and egg” situation – if there is no service, then there is no demand and it may be that only the government can identify this and ensure that people/drivers change their habits over time to use an improved service.

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

Q18 comments: Focus on principles not on the “how” of delivery. Targeted specification seems sensible

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

Q19 comments: retention of enhanced % of net surplus in providing the service for a period of several years.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Environmental issues – to get more people off the roads. No increases at more than the CPI. Encourage use of the railways at off-peak times.

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: no view

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: no view

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:

It would be easier if the different types of tickets were based directly on miles/km travelled to remove any anomalies of e.g. advance Aberdeen to Edinburgh tickets being cheaper than Stonehaven Edinburgh on the same train (I don't know if that still happens).

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: no view

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: positive merit in involving local promoters for stations

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 lease costs are too high. The franchisee should be paid by Network Rail to manage the stations. The rail has no value if the trains do not stop anywhere. There should be separate government funding of the tracks and stations – as for roads.

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

Q27 comments: Having a regular train service which co-ordinates with the local buses.

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

Q28 comments: the outline proposals sound sensible.

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. The layout of track and platforms and lack of support makes transfer in Edinburgh very difficult and time consuming and almost impossible for elderly or infirm to transfer along with their luggage.
The cross-border services also provide a very much better customer experience than the current carriages used by ScotRail – I use those services in preference if the timetable is otherwise convenient.
Scotrail does not deserve to get the money these services receive because Scotrail has such poor train carriages.
The services should be specified by Scottish Ministers.

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: There is already an Edinburgh “Hub” with opportunities for Scottish connections. Terminating services would not make this better.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Very complex area so have no comment.

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

Q32 comments: Any journey over 1 hour should have free internet access

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: It should be high. It is ridiculous that you can get this on inter-city bus services and not on the train.

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: There should be more flexibility with the train conductor to offer first-class seats on payment of a small supplement where there is overcrowding and first class is not full.

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

Q35 comments: Ability to enforce the ban is the main issue – and there should also be a ban on someone who is completely intoxicated being on the train (just off the rigs, waited for the train in a pub). Evidence should be obtained from train staff and transport police.

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

Q36 comments:

- 1) An i-phone android app like the one Edinburgh uses for the buses.
- 2) carriages should have electronic reservation displays, not pieces of paper. This would allow a) reservations to be made up to a later time b) reduces work to be done in stations c) passengers removing the paper.

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: continue to specify

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: separate.

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 biggest problems for me is the time the sleeper takes to get from Aberdeen to London – a network rail problem not a franchisers issue. It takes much longer overnight (and my experience was it was not reliable). I don't want to have to go into a sleeper mid evening. I also had a problem because the sleeper service was not available on Saturday. Because of these problems I do not consider the sleeper but would take a "red-eye" flight instead from Aberdeen.

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 comment