

## **Consultation Questions**

### **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:

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

Q2 comments: longer durations and less detailed contracts, perhaps with break points, may lead to greater investment.

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

Q3 comments: passenger numbers can be affected by several external (to the franchise) factors, including the economic situation, availability, desirability (e.g. speed) and price of competing modes changing. Some risk support mechanism in respect to these appears desirable.

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

Q4 comments: as with 3, upside adjustments for external issues seem appropriate

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

Q5 comments: not sure what you mean by this, whether micro-franchises (e.g. Largs branch) or offering services on a single (branch line or route, e.g. west highland routes, or Edinburgh to North Berwick) to a distinct firm, as local services are tended in Germany and Sweden. Such firms need adequate resources though, so may not be easy to encourage new entrants and barriers are quite high. Use of separate firms may be more justified for say on-train trolleys, for operating (combined) shops and booking offices, for other people requirements (e.g. on train revenue inspection) as well as for outsourcing cleaning and maintenance.

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: No comment.

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

Q8 comments: No comment

### **Achieving reliability, performance and service quality**

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

Q9 comments: Both seems appropriate and balanced

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: separate service groups would appear sensible, perhaps Strathclyde, other central belt and the others

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

Q11 comments: whilst customers are interested in the performance of their particular journey, this can only be handled with a delay-repay type regime, as measuring performance other than one whole journeys would seem successive (provided there is not a lot of padding at ends of journeys to flatter the figures).

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

Q12 comments: passengers want punctual trains and reasonable prices first of all. Safety is also high on our agenda, but not at any price, I would suggest (thinking for example of post-Hatfield) given risks and issues in alternative transport alternatives..

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: only those managed by the franchise, surely??

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

Q14 comments: Customer surveys and compliant feedback are two key indicators, and PF already undertake the former (and provide comparison too with other ToCs).

### **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: standing time of about 20 minutes is used in the London area and does not seem unacceptable.

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: Easy interchanges between public transport modes may well increase usage of public transport generally, although there is often relatively little modal change and diverting buses and stopping trains additionally is only sensible if interchange is facilitated readily and used. On the other hand airports need a sufficient frequent service (by both bus and train) to make it easy for car drivers to shift modes (Prestwick is good, Glasgow and Edinburgh need to be linked, Dyce less so), and sea ports (e.g. Oban, Stranraer and its replacement, Ardrossan Harbour) need connections at the right time.

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: see 18

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

Q18 comments: Light. Specify indicative first and last train times, indicative peak capacity (e.g. numbers of coaches in peak hour), indicative typical journey times and outline frequencies.

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

Q19 comments: franchisees should be encouraged to experiment with new services (subject to NR agreement on reliability and PPM impact) and if less successful reduce them or remove them relatively quickly (e.g. next timetable change date.)

### **Scottish rail fares**

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

Q20 comments: to encourage use of rail as transport mode, whilst not undercutting alternatives significantly, and therefore with reason maximising revenue take compared with costs.

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: The current fares policy e.g. capping commuter peak fares and elsewhere off-peak day returns for short distance and off-peak returns for longer (i.e.. Saver fares as were) seems sensible.

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: If you really want to increase fares for service enhancements, then do it one of the other times in the year (e.g. May and September) in addition and make it clear why. On balance though users expect enhancements over time anyway (as expectations rise, and alternatives are improved) and realise that they will be delivered from time to time. Also current fares policy seems to be seen to be saying you are paying now for future improvements. There is a balance to be struck though with the fact that new roads are not charged more unless tolls are applied), and usually not ne improved road services either. Beware what has happened in SET, where everyone is paying for the HS services (by an RPI+3% for some recent years), even those users e.g. from Tonbridge who are nowhere near it and cannot access it.

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 is desirable to have a range of walk-on peak, fringe peak and (super) off peak fares (which ideally are not simply time driven but related to demand) to encourage travel at less busy times (whilst covering at least marginal costs) whilst not being too expensive in peak times that modal transfer is affected. Fares also need to have account to alternative competitive modes, e.g. buses for relatively short 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 urban areas where customers use alternative public transport e.g. buses or other nearby stations, it may be sensible to close stations or restrict service hours. Whilst some stations are little used in rural areas they equally provide a social service to remoter places often not otherwise served by public transport and indeed since many are serviced on request there is little cost to doing so.

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: stopping trains on existing routes at new stations will lengthen journey times and if traffic is primarily abstracted from existing stations may not be that sensible, and indeed may lead to additional roiling stock being needed.

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: None

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

Q27 comments: by making it easier for them to do, e.g. in terms of the excessive health and safety restrictions often applied.

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

Q28 comments: proposals do not seem unreasonable.

### **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. Customers (particularly those who are elderly or have baggage e.g. tourist visitors) do not like changing and connections are often not guaranteed and changes can often lead to extended journey times. They also often provide additional capacity into and out of Edinburgh at peak times (as happens elsewhere in the country as well)

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: Not a good idea. Edinburgh station is busy enough as it is without having more people changing trains (or being lost to other means of transport instead).

### **Rolling stock**

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

Q31 comments: reduce the over-provision for excessive health and safety aspects (parts of Network Rail current group standards) and equally the over-provision for the disabled.

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 (on all but short distance services), 1st class (on medium and longer distance), buffet cars (or trolleys) on longer distance trains. Adequate numbers of seats (probably in a 2+2 format, with enough room for standees, cycles and prams etc. as well (507/508 unit interiors on Merseyside and SWT's class 455s are good examples) for suburban services, and 2+2 plus cycle provision on longer distances => may imply longer trains - perhaps by multiple seats with more flexible train provision (e.g. coupling and detaching). Air-conditioning as standard for new build.

### **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 would be better to prioritise proper (and well enforced) quiet coaches

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: Provision of premium services (e.g. larger seats, tables, quiet, places to work) at a reasonable premium fare is often expected by business people, visitors and often by the elderly and should be retained and encouraged.

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

Q35 comments: Moderate consumption is generally said to be positive. It is the people - not the alcohol as such - that can cause problems. In any event it can be purchased elsewhere and brought onto trains, and perhaps consumed on stations or furtively. Better education in schools and other restriction on the availability of alcohol appears preferable. Bans on certain trains (as at present) in conjunction with football matches should continue but otherwise not. Buffet staff should be encouraged more not to service rowdy customers though.

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

Q36 comments: improved train information at most stations, better dissemination of information about problems and delays (either by screens, or by combine information and help-points, at remoter stations, as FGW have installed recently)

### **Caledonian Sleeper**

Please note that the sleeper coaches were built in the early to mid 1980s (not as 11.9 says the early 1970s) and therefore probably have at least another 10 years + lifespan, given their relatively low utilisation compared with day vehicles. Seems that the Mark 2 BSOs and RFOs may need some work though.

37. Should we continue to specify sleeper services, or should this be a purely commercial matter for a train operating company?

Q37 comments: continued operation of sleeper services appears very desirable as a both pleasant and environmentally friendly alternative to the need to fly.

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?

38 comments: Could be either. Within the ScotRail franchise on balance appears better since that better encourages through journeys beyond the sleepers (e.g. beyond Inverness, Aberdeen and elsewhere in the West highlands, also in the central belt and just north therefore from the lowland sleepers)

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: Caledonian sleeper services, as mentioned earlier, provide comfortable, environmentally friendly and convenient alternatives to flying and should be retained. Destinations do not seem unreasonable, as they need to be able to provide servicing and supplies as well and the larger (and historic) station at Oban was demolished some years ago. Sleeper services should continue to also convey seating, and if this was increased perhaps multiple trains to and from Inverness in particular might again become supportable (i.e. earlier departures giving early arrivals plus later departures and later arrivals, with appropriate calling points in mid Scotland) e.g.. could be two highland sleepers, one serving Inverness and Aberdeen and the other Inverness and Fort William (or Edinburgh, with the Fort William portion part of the Glasgow train). To me the current sleeper coaches and their facilities are fine, although the Swedes have some vehicles with self contained combined shower and toilet cubicles in a very restricted amount of space - offered at a higher price - which might be considered when acquiring additional stock.

### **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: Nothing particularly