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: Hiving off the profit making bits of the railway removes the idea that the railway exists to provide a service to the population and the country as a whole. A 2 tier system would create "Cinderella" services which may only be seen as a drain on Public Finances rather than a part of a network.

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

Q2 comments: Longer franchises are better, as long as they can be adequately controlled and, if required, changed or cancelled by Transport Scotland. However, the franchise system encourages short termism from operators. Ideally the railways should be run by a not for profit organisation like "Network Rail" on a perpetual basis. I would like to see the Scottish Government challenge Westminster's insistence on the continuation of the current system.

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

Q3 comments: The share of the risk should be equal to the share of any profits. If the franchisee takes all the profits during the good times, they should take all the risk and not be allowed to hand back the franchise and walk away.

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

Q4 comments: The franchise should be run on a not for profit basis, where all profits are reinvested in the railways.

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

Q5 comments: Groups like NESTRANS or "Friends of" groups should be involved in the promotion and strategic decision making of lines in their area. However the day to day running of the railway should be carried out by the franchisee.

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

Q6 comments: As with Network Rail, individuals within a not for profit organisation can be incentivised through pay and bonuses which reflect individual performance and the performance of the system as a whole. If shareholder profits do not have to be made, then it is far easier to reward employees of all levels for the success of an organisation.

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

Q7 comments: GNER showed that a very good franchise can be destroyed by a problematic parent company. This should not be allowed to happen to any Scotrail franchise. But a wholly owned not for profit organisation would ensure this.

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

Q8 comments: Reduction in payments in the first instance or removal of the franchise for greater issues.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: No rail system is going to work at 100% punctuality all the time. A reasonably achievable level of performance should be agreed with achievement over this level being rewarded and performance below it 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: It should be aligned to routes. As a season ticket holder on the Dunblane to Edinburgh service it is obvious that this line is not seen as a priority by the current franchise holder. I would like to see any degradation in any one route automatically attracting compensation for those travelling on that route.

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

Q11 comments: The current regime encourages Scotrail to run trains non-stop or terminate them early in order to make PPM, regardless of the effect on

passengers. Doing this sort of thing should be penalised. As a passenger I would prefer to arrive late than not at all.

Scotrail often fiddle the results by fully cancelling a train and running a Very Short Term Planning (VSTP) service in it's place with missed out stops or retimings. It then claims this train is on-time and so this negates the negative score from the cancelled train. This practice should not be allowed and VSTP trains should be exempted from any performance calculations.

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

Q12 comments: Stop trying to run more and more trains where there are already lots of trains. By all means increase capacity by lengthening trains but increasing frequency beyond every 15 minutes will just gum everything up on approach to Queen Street and Waverley even more so than at present. It is also not necessary for all trains to stop at the same stations. The Dunblane to Edinburgh services all stop everywhere with only 2 options of a limited stop train per day. Usually it's quicker to drive than take the train. There should be at least 1 express train per hour on all routes so it can compete with the car for journey time.

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: There has to be a check on the service to passengers, including stations and trains. But it's not fair to penalise the franchise for something it can have no impact on so only franchise managed stations should be included. Dunbar should become a Scotrail station now they are running more trains to it, but Lockerbie should move to Trans Pennine.

The current SQUIRE system encourages train cleaning staff to remove loads of perfectly readable Metro papers from trains. If I travel on a train later in the day, when there are no Metros in the station dispensers, I look for one on the train but I am frequently disappointed. Allowing Scotrail to leave neat and tidy papers on the trains for others to read would be a benefit to passengers.

The lack of bins in main stations is crazy. The world has moved on since the Waterloo bomb and I can see no valid reason for not having them now. If someone wants to detonate a bomb in a station then they'll do it, bins or no bins. All this achieves is leaving our stations like a tip and making paying passengers fell uncomfortable both with the litter and having to add their own waste to that litter as there's nowhere else to put it. It also fuels a culture of it be ok to leave litter about on the railway.

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

Q14 comments: Ask passengers what they want to see. Personally I'm driven mad by far too many announcements in stations and on trains. The Network Rail operated stations' PA commentary is a joke. Tell me where and when the train is going or where we're about to call at only. Most passengers will concur with this, yet SQUIRE insists an almost continual blurb from the PA system both in trains and stations.

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: During peak times there will always be standing on trains, but no-one should be standing out with peak times. I often travel from Polmont to Edinburgh at 1730 on a Sunday and the train (only 3 coaches) is always packed, yet nothing is done to change this, despite lots of sets sitting doing nothing at Haymarket Depot. On Sundays when the service is halved, the length of each train should be doubled.

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: It depends on how long the portions of journey are either side of the change. Using Perth to change from Inverness-Edinburgh to Aberdeen-Glasgow services makes sense, as long as the wait is as short as possible. But having to change on a one hour journey would put people off travelling by rail.

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: There has to be minimum standards for all services, but franchises should have the ability to exceed these if demand requires it.

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

Q18 comments: As a minimum the present level of service should be maintained.

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

Q19 comments: By allowing the franchisee, or those running a not for profit franchise, to retain a share of increased revenues from more attractive services in the form of increased company profits or individual bonuses.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: To encourage affordable access to the rail network while managing demand.

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: Strathclyde fares always seem to be lower than others on the network. Therefore there is a suggestion that regulated fares encourage greater use of the railways. Peak fares on all routes should be regulated to prevent gross profiteering on a captive market. There are lots of anomalies where 2 separate tickets are cheaper than 1 which, unless you know how to play the system, makes fares look overly inflated. These should be removed.

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: Fares should not rise more than the current 1% above RPI. Any more than this and it reduces the incentive for franchisees to increase revenue through increased passenger numbers. A small one-off higher increase for an enhanced service may be acceptable, but not year on year higher increases.

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: Off peak should be at least 40% lower than pear. This should apply to single fares as well as return, and off peak returns for short distances should not be limited to one day. Off-peak singles are often just 10p less than the off-peak return fare. This completely discourages one way or overnight journeys. I often travel from Stirling to stay overnight in Glasgow and would prefer to take the train, but the pricing structure activity discourages me from doing this and so I normally drive.

The timings of off-peak services needs to be looked at. Some very early morning services should be made off peak and more of an effort should be

made to tell people what restrictions there are on off-peak tickets. This is the 21st century and yet the Scotrail website doesn't even tell you what the off-peak evening restrictions are!!! This is scandalous!

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: It should be remembered that opening stations can have a detrimental effect on existing services, lengthening journeys and increasing overcrowding. Any effort to tap into new markets has to be combined by putting in place the infrastructure and services to compliment the new station.

Similarly services can be improved by missing out stops or closing very lightly used stations. However this should only be done when it is obvious that the market does not exist for that station.

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 funding of services by 3rd parties is useful. The role of SPT in providing and promoting rail services in the Strathclyde area should be seen as a model for both Transport Scotland and for prospective 3rd parties. But it should be ensured that any services are integrated into the wider network.

As an example of where this can fail; The Motherwell to Cumbernauld service is underutilised, yet proposals to extend it to Stirling or Alloa to create a whole new, and much needed, rail corridor for Central Scotland have never materialised due to funding issues.

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: If the franchisee was a not for profit organisation then this would not be a problem.

Under the current system it is in the interests of the franchisee to ensure the upkeep of stations as attractive places to travel from. This should be done in conjunction with Network Rail, who have a long term interest in the infrastructure.

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

Q27 comments: By using it and promoting it's use! The railways are not a charity and should avoid the use of volunteer labour to do tasks for which people should be employed.

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

Q28 comments: All Stations should have:- lighting, a bin, a covered bike rack, some form of PA system (except in very rural stations), timetable information, covered and uncovered seating on each platform, CCTV (except in very rural stations), parking if space is available, DDA compliance if possible.

Medium stations should also have:- train displays on each platform, a staffed booking office, a shop, a bus interchange, rentable bike lockers, taxi rank.

Large stations should also have:- Luggage trolleys, a buffet and/or bar, a selection of shops, staffed bike rental and storage facility.

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: Many passengers, including myself, use these services because they offer higher quality of passenger accommodation and faster services which do not stop at every lamppost. The fear would be that if they were terminated at Edinburgh then Stirling would loose one of it's 2 fast trains a day to Edinburgh with no replacement but a 2 car 158.

If high quality rolling stock was provided to replace these services with like for like capacity, spread throughout the day but maintaining overall capacity and faster timings, then I would agree to the termination of all non-Scotrail operated services at Edinburgh. If the alternative is shoving the passengers onto existing slow and overcrowded existing services then I would be against it.

Transport Scotland should be allowed to specify these services.

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: Edinburgh Waverley is already a busy station. The increase in passengers would have to be carefully managed. Additional platforms would also be required, possibly by connecting 12 and 13 to the Motorail sidings, or by utilising New Street Car Park.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: ROSCOs must make a profit. Take the provision of rolling stock for a perpetual not for profit franchisee and this profit can be used to reduce the overall cost over the lifecycle of the stock.

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

Q32 comments: All trains should have toilets, PA, CIS, bike provision, a mix of table (minitable on commuter services) and airline seating. Non-commuter trains should also have luggage space, powerpoints and a catering trolly. Trains between Edinburgh and Glasgow to Aberdeen and Inverness should have completely segregated quiet zone, 1st class as exists in 170 units and wi-fi. 158 units should not have 1st class provision. What exists as 1st class in the refurbished 158 units is a joke.

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: Inter-city services should definitely have this. Highland and longer commuter services should probably have it. Commuter services would be nice but should not be seen as a 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: The default position should always be to grow the passenger base by offering seats where required. This is especially important on Sundays where the lack of provision later in the day puts people off travelling. If this requires more stock to be purchased or leased then so be it.

We currently have the strange situation where 90mph 158 units are used on the Dunblane to Stirling service, where much of the running is on 100mph lines, yet 100mph 170 units are used in Fife services which have no 100mph

running. This results in the Dunblane services frequently running 3-5 minutes late by the time they get to Polmont from Edinburgh.

The provision of 1st class just removes the capacity for standard class seating. This should only be considered when there will be no reduction in existing provision.

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

Q35 comments: Banning alcohol would be a retrograde step. It can be very pleasant to have a drink on a long journey and the majority of passengers who do drink on trains do so without affecting other passengers. The current system of football bans seems to work well.

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

Q36 comments: Ask passengers what they want to know first. Don't dilute real information with blurb about toilets, 1st class and passenger safety cards. People aren't stupid and can work out where these things are. We know not to leave luggage unattended at stations.

Get more real time information on the mobile phone app. There's a great feature on the website regarding which lines have a good service, yet this isn't on the android app.?

Allow people to find out train times on-line or via apps without labelling it "Buy Tickets", just call it what it is… "Find Train Times"

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: Sleeper services should be an integral part of the Scotrail franchise.

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: As I believe that the franchise should be run by a publically owned not-for-profit company then this question is irrelevant. But as it is a very different beast is should be managed separately from the rest of the franchise.

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: As a user of the sleeper services I was very pleased to hear of a £50m investment in new rolling stock. This service is vital to provide rail competition to overnight coaches.

Lounge cars should have seats and tables rather than the sofas currently provided. 1st class cabins should be en-suite with std class cabins having shared facilities. The toiletries bags given out should include earplugs which I find invaluable on these services. Seated accommodation should be all in airline format with very low levels of lighting and individual reading lights. The ability of the seated passengers to use some form of bar or lounge area would be good. All berth sleeper passengers should be entitled to a free shower at Edinburgh/Glasgow or Euston.

On the subject of price there is a huge disparity between bargain berth prices and regular standard class prices. These should be changed to a flat price aimed a growing the market.

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: The continued electrification of the main network should be progressed in order to reduce the carbon footprint of the railway. Recycling or waste from passengers and trains should be a greater priority. If Airlines can segregate waste on-board then so should Scotrail.