

## Consultation Questions

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### 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: It seems to me that while there may be some merits of a dual focus franchise, the argument for the benefit of a single entity both in terms of economies of scale and integration is pressing. There would be a need to create new, presently non-existent interfaces in a dual franchise and this would lead to further, avoidable costs.

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

Q2 comments: I would argue for a franchise of not less than ten years. This would a) make the franchise attractive for potential bidders and b) lead to more long term planning rather than short term opportunism.

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

Q3 comments: Franchisees should be supported by the Scottish Executive in terms of shared risks, the amounts to be determined by sensible forecasting and analysis of data.

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

Q4 comments: I do not see a need for profit sharing, as the existing Scotrail routes do not make a profit.

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

Q5 comments: They should not.

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: Any bidder for the Scotrail franchise should be obliged to give guarantees as to viability and capital reserves held. A repeat of the GNER scenario, while unlikely, is highly undesirable.

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

Q8 comments: These should be twofold: financial penalties and the threat of putting the franchise to bid should commitments not be met by the incumbent.

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

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

Q9 comments: Why is this a dichotomy? It should surely be possible to incentivise good performance – possibly by extension of the franchise, which would not incur cost – and also by penalising poor performance as in my response to Q8.

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: There should be one system for the whole country, but one which takes cognisance of the huge differences between routes such as Inverness – Wick and Edinburgh – Glasgow via Falkirk.

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

Q11 comments: The issues which seem to matter to passengers are timekeeping, comfort and cleanliness (see January 2012 publication of passenger perception of Scotrail). The performance regime should be dynamic and related to these issues, as well as to the robustness of the services offered (whether or not services are run).

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

Q12 comments: Journey times are not the only issue which matters to passengers, but they are important. In BR days, late meant late – not 10 minutes late. A return to a more accurate measure of timekeeping would be appreciated by most people, including myself. However, performance means also whether or not trains are cancelled, how comfortable the trains are (try going from Glasgow to Inverness in a 170 if like me you are 6 feet tall or more) and how clean they are (I commute from Glasgow to Dumfries and the 156 comes off a suburban service before going to Carlisle, and it is inevitably filthy).

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, and it should cover all aspects.

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

Q14 comments: Passenger focus groups, on train surveys (as used by Northern Rail), secret travellers, web based monitoring of passenger satisfaction, etc. These should feed into a base of information which would give a user satisfaction index. This in turn would feed into incentives/penalties.

### **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: No. Increasing the capacity limit is stupidly dangerous. I have been on a 158 where it was almost impossible to breathe due to the crush of people. If – God forbid – there had been a derailment or collision, this unit would have been a scene of carnage. Retain existing capacities. I think 10 minutes – or indeed any finite limit is a very crude measure. If you are disabled, or, say, suffering from cancer, then 10 minutes standing is an eternity ( I speak from the personal experience of a near relative). How tolerable standing is, depends upon the individual's capacity to tolerate it.

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 can see the point of using Edinburgh as an exchange hub in that using the Scotrail services beyond Edinburgh would retain revenues for the Scottish franchisee. However, if rail is to compete for passenger traffic from places like Aberdeen and Inverness (both currently serviced by East Coast direct services from London, then direct trains must be retained. Passengers will not like the possibility of transfer, with all the increased potential for delay and non completion of journeys. Through trains are also of higher quality rolling stock such as 125s, and people will not like exchanging the comfort of these for the much lesser degree of comfort of a 170, believe me. I have done it recently, so I speak from experience.

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. The franchisee should be responsive to demand, but the Government which pays for the railway should specify a minimum level of service provision. The franchisee could then develop this.

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

Q18 comments: As above

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

Q19 comments: There are ways this can be done. For instance, serving additional stations. Let me give you an instance. The train to Dumfries passes through two populous areas at Mauchline and Thornhill. Both had stations, closed in the sixties. These should be considered for re-opening, tapping into the commuter market to Glasgow in the first instance, and to Dumfries and Carlisle in the second. Secondly, the franchisee can develop new through services – why is Edinburgh – Ayr impossible, since the City of Glasgow Union line can be used? Thirdly, the franchisee should be incentivised to provide a wider variety of traction: 170s are NOT suitable for three hour journeys other than on grounds of cost.

### **Scottish rail fares**

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

Q20 comments:

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: Some routes – Edinburgh-Glasgow for instance – are likely to be more lucrative than others. Routes can be classified according to their usage and fares set to incentivise travel on less heavily used routes, while not discouraging travel on those which are heavily used and more lucrative.

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 comment

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: I cannot comment on the difference in detail, but in general, off peak should be incentivised to even out demand as far as is possible.

### **Scottish stations**

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

Q24 comments: Some stations – and lines – are clearly on the edge of viability, such as Girvan to Stranraer. If trains are carting fresh air around Scotland, then two things should happen. Firstly, every means should be explored of developing passenger traffic, including local interest groups, friends groups and even micro franchises. If these fail, the line should be mothballed – but on no account demolished (cf the Waverley route) – until proposals are forthcoming for its future effective regeneration.

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: Considerable. See my comments above on Mauchline/Thornhill. Opportunities for development of the rail service should be taken wherever these may be found.

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: I cannot comment in detail on this, but it seems to me that the franchisee should be responsible for stations with the exception of major stations such as Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Central, as at present. If one organisation is responsible, it leads to much simpler lines of communication and responsibility.

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

Q27 comments: Look at what happens in England. People have responsibility and through safety schemes, access to stations in order to improve them for themselves cf West Runton. But it should go much further than this. While friends of stations groups attract conscientious and worthwhile contributors – cf Wemyss Bay, there is much to be said for LINE development groups. These would be more effective in terms of lightly used lines such as that to Dumfries. Such a group would have a Line Development Manager, appointed

by the franchisee, a representative of Network Rail (or the equivalent if vertical integration is ever achieved), local community groups, businesses and service users more widely. The success of this model is already well acknowledged on the Settle and Carlisle line. A similar approach should be piloted on, say the GSWR, and then evaluated before being rolled out if successful.

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

Q28 comments: No comment.

### **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, YES, YES, cross border services should continue to operate north of Edinburgh. They benefit passengers by providing a seamless travel experience which makes accessing the north much easier, and also for the communities in the north, provide easier access to markets and populations in the south. See my comments on this issue above.

Service specification should be drawn up by the interaction of both Transport Scotland and the Department for Transport. Surely this is not beyond the wit of mankind in a small island like ours?

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: I can see no benefits other than those accruing to the franchisee of having a hub in Edinburgh. The franchise holder would benefit from the retention of revenues in Scotland, but that is about the only 'positive' outcome there could be. For passengers, it would be a disaster and would inevitably result in the loss of confidence and traffic to the railway.

### **Rolling stock**

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

Q31 comments: Look more widely for provision! If ROSCOS must be used, as seems likely in a Scotland still part of the UK, then a harder bargain should be driven. If not, then lease-purchase agreements should be explored. Of course, outright ownership is unlikely, even if it is desirable.

A more significant issue is that the rolling stock in Scotland is of generally

execrable quality, although paradoxically generally reliable. DMU stock is now approaching its 30<sup>th</sup> year in service (156 and 158) and needs replacement. In particular, stock used on long distance trains is entirely unsuitable – 170s on journeys of 170-200 miles. Replacements should be engineered with passenger needs in mind, not just the cheapest method of operation as at present. How many rail managers, I wonder have to put up with an 80 mile journey every week, as I do, with no heating in sub zero temperatures?

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

Q32 comments: Facilities must vary according to service. There is no question about that. While some suburban services can cope without toilets – such as the Cathcart Circle – others will require them and stock utilised on outer suburban – say, Gourock, Helensburgh – will most definitely require them. High capacity DMUs and EMUs will be able to do without if used solely on inner suburban services. All other trains require them. Eating facilities should be provided on any journey over 30 miles: it is interesting that Glasgow-Edinburgh trains have trolley service while those to Ayr do not. Long distance services should have some means of refreshment, although it is sometimes difficult to see how these can be justified on lightly loaded trains such as those to Stranraer and Carlisle via Dumfries.

### **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: If you wish to attract and retain business travellers then these are now a priority: I have used them on Cross Country services. Use of 4G mobile phones and I pads will significantly increase and become an essential aspect of work life. Rail services need to cope with this demand, and some companies are already catering for this as you will know.

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: Additional capacity can be provided in a number of ways. Firstly you can provide fewer seats and have more standing. The evidence from England is that this causes much resentment – see papers by Lord Berkeley. Secondly, you can offer additional vehicles. The flexibility of the new 380s is excellent in this respect, being available in 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 car formations. Thirdly, you can purchase/lease additional vehicles to strengthen existing formations – see Pendolinos being expanded to 11 cars. What you do depends on the line, the services being offered, what can be decanted if new stock is leased / purchased, the market and the demand.

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

Q35 comments: Alcohol should be banned on all Scotrail trains. Full stop. If you have had to endure as I have, the presence of drunken louts on Edinburgh-Glasgow and Dumfries-Glasgow, you would not give a moment's thought to this issue. It is threatening to passengers and I feel heart sorry for staff who have to deal with it. The rights of drinkers are much less significant than those who simply wish to travel in peace.

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

Q36 comments: More real time signage, conductors up to date through phones as is presently being done, information on options at interchanges including bus options, signage linked to signal information showing exactly where trains are, etc. The technology is there – use it.

### **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: Yes a thousand times, the sleeper should be specified. I am a regular user of the service from Glasgow to London and am aware of the increase in demand for this service: it is virtually impossible to get a cabin at short notice now, whereas when I re-started using the service 5 years ago this could be done. Train operating companies would not necessarily retain the sleeper network as it is, and it should be grown, not curtailed.

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 operates effectively enough within the Scotrail franchise and I have nothing but praise for those who run it. Savings could possibly be made through changing the traction company, or by taking traction provision in house, although this would require a) the modification of the safety case for Scotrail and b) the purchase/lease of suitable electric and diesel locomotives. Neither of these is impossible. I can see little or no benefit from operating the sleeper as a separate franchise. Scotrail has done well in building the popularity of these trains, has experience in operating them effectively, and generally does very well with them. If it is not broken, there is no need to fix it.

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 sleeper service is configured correctly at the present time for the existing markets and demand. There are a number of factors which make me and my family regular users of this service. These are a) comfort – it is great to go to sleep in Glasgow and wake up in London, saving a hotel bill: b) cost – it is cheaper than flying and without the hassle of security procedures, cancelled and late flights, etc. I would never go back to air travel now: c) The appeal of the sleeper is directly linked to the facilities offered. Early/late trains could not replace these. I have done the old newspaper trains in my youth and believe me, the sleeper is a thousand times better. The sleeper services should not, under any circumstances, cease to serve Inverness, Fort William and Aberdeen. Tourism and business would suffer without a doubt if this happens. Reconfiguration, however, should possibly include additional stops for the highland trains – for instance, Perth. I do not consider that there will be a business case for Oban, regrettable as that is. On the issue of stock, I am aware of the provision of £100m for stock renewal. There are 2 alternatives for this. The first is to gut the existing Mk 3 vehicles and rework them with fewer compartments, and more space. While the interiors are getting tired, the bodies and underframes are good and easily revitalised. That is the cheap option. The expensive option is to provide entirely new stock. A paradigm for this exists in the Mark 4 Nightstar design which was intended for the Channel Tunnel but never used. The drawings are all available and this design has the advantage of UIC compatibility. Consideration should be given to abolition of the situation where strangers have to share a cabin. This is not always a pleasant experience and deters people: I speak from experience. Additionally make the breakfast worth eating, please. A shortbread finger at 6.45 is not exactly appetising.

## **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 environmental performance indicators should be based on a carbon-neutral basis. If airlines can claim to do this, surely railways can, too.