

## 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 is essential to have a social focus, since, as quite rightly pointed out, the rail service is vital to many rural areas, including where I stay. Whether it is practical to also have a dual focus economic element, I can't say. But it is vital to keep the social focus, so if a dual one is not practicable, this should be the focus.

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

Q2 comments: No more than 5 years, since if service is unsatisfactory, there ought to be opportunities to change quickly. I also agree that shorter contracts will make the franchisee more responsive. If Scotland becomes independent, there is also the option presumably for the government taking on the franchise (which it currently cannot do).

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

Q3 comments: can't usefully comment

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

Q4 comments: Franchise arrangements where the franchisee takes all or most of the profit lead to higher fares and a cherry picking of routes which are more profitable. I would prefer a mutual or cooperative approach where profits are ploughed back into the service and not into shareholder's pockets.

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

Q5 comments: It seems that there is a danger the third parties will be expected to pick up gaps in the service – which should not be there in the first place. It seems to me a danger also in having short term projects.

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

Q6 comments: If the goal really is to have a passenger-centric, cost-efficient

and better integrated service, we must look to the needs of people. The franchisee provides these for a fee. Is this not incentive enough?

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

Q7 comments: can't usefully comment

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

Q8 comments: Fines which are ploughed back into the service. Outcome-focussed approach seems worth a try – but good contracts essential.

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

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

Q9 comments: incentivise presumably means cash bonus – and this again takes away from money for the service. So penalise only.

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 for the whole of Scotland. It would make the franchisee address attention to areas where they are not achieving. Just because we live in a rural area does not mean that performance and punctuality are not an issue.

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

Q11 comments: Difficult to say. It is clear from the surveys cited that you know what the public value (and I would add to the examples, a decent website which allows one to get information about fares and problems). It then remains to assess whether the current arrangements with SQUIRE adequately address these issues, or if they need tweaking. A self-monitoring system is NOT a good option.

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

Q12 comments: Reliability and punctuality are important. Adjusting the timetable is not really dealing with the problem. It only gives more of a margin for error. If trains are punctual, the timetable works. Most people I am sure would not object to an extra 5 minutes added – but the more time is added the

more this becomes an invitation for sloppy punctuality.

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:

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

Q14 comments:

### **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: Living in Inverness, I have no direct experience here – though rail services are getting busier thanks to the flexi-pass system. However, another way of looking at it is if there is large demand on certain services, the rolling stock should be flexible enough to allow extra carriages.

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: While this simplifies things from the rail provider's perspective, it is less preferable for the traveller. I will always try to get the direct service for convenience – and because there is not the danger of missed connections. As a result, I will plan journeys around the one daytime train which connects Inverness to London directly. For the elderly and tourists with a lot of luggage, direct services are certainly to be preferred. More interchanges also mean that these stations have to have more staff on the platform for answering questions – and this is not always the case. If we going for a passenger-centric service, direct services should be incorporated where possible.

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: The Gov't should definitely have a say, and direct the franchisee who will only be governed by profitability. However, the franchisee

should also be allowed to propose additional services.

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

Q18 comments: Targetted specification is fine – as long as it involves full specification for the social routes. Again, because I don't use the higher volume commuter routes, I don't know how people there would feel about leaving their arrangements in the hands of the franchisee.

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

Q19 comments: The proof is the number of people who make use of the service. It increases (but not at the expense of deleted or re-timed services) the franchisee is doing well. I'm not in favour of cash incentives then going to the company since this again means money that could be used for rail transport goes to shareholders. Is there any other way?

### **Scottish rail fares**

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

Q20 comments: Quite right – keep simple and easily understood. The subsidised flexi-pass is not mentioned in your consultation document, but has been a real success here within the Inverness commuting area and should be continued. Price increases however seem to be far too steep. Why above inflation? The franchisee is already making a profit, and we are paying more. Pegging fares to petrol costs is not fair, especially since those of us in rural areas are already paying far more. Fares baskets seem a ridiculously complex way to go, and only leads to feelings of being overcharged.

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 fares should be regulated, leaving the franchisee the option to offer cheaper options to tempt travellers if they wish. The regulation should also be watchful of lost leaders – eg where extremely limited numbers of seats are available at the advertised low price (this has happened in the past, eg family sleepers, where only 9 berths were available at the advertised cheap rate!).

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: See above Q20. Fares should not be above inflation and should not be pegged to petrol costs (ie if petrol goes up 12%, rail fares should not follow). Public transport, as mentioned in the consultation document, is more than simply getting from A to B. It has profound social implications, and like it or not, subsidies will be necessary. But the more people who are using the train, the fewer on the road, the fewer new bridges and other infrastructure needed. Increases in fuel duty should be channelled directly into public transport, and not into general coffers. Again, this is probably not possible because it is a reserved issue, but if there was an independent Scotland presumably this option would be on the table.

I also don't agree that fares increases should be directed to those areas where there have been recent improvements. Often the reason the improvements were necessary is that these areas were allowed to run down, something people in the area had no say about.

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: Peak time commuters generally do not have an option to take advantage of off peak services – so the level of service will need to be the same (or better). Presumably the reason for having peak time fares more expensive is to discourage those with flexibility. It has worked elsewhere. Having said that, here in the Highlands we do not have the options. There are simply not enough commuting services to Inverness. It is better than it was, but still not enough. A train service arriving in Inverness for c. 9:45 would be useful, would leave more capacity for the 9 to 5 commuting.

### **Scottish stations**

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

Q24 comments: Consultation with users. Here in the Highlands, as Inverness grows, more commuter stations would result in higher use. The Beaulieu station I believe is considered a success (though if new stations are commissioned, they should get the facts right and make sure the platform size is correct!). Yes, this will result in slower journeys, but for the commuter runs this is useful. Consultation will also show that a connection to the airport is desirable.

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: Everyone should be able to propose (and already people do so.) It is funding a station or service which is the issue. Realistically I think the

funding will have to come from the Scottish Government since local authorities are cutting back on everything at the moment. It is an investment. A new station should result in more use of the service which should result in more revenue.

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: Having the franchisee responsible surely will not lead to investment in the stations. So it follows that Network Rail is the obvious contender to have overall responsibility, though perhaps it would work to allow subcontracting, subject to certain standards being maintained.

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

Q27 comments: Perhaps taking on the subcontract to maintain a station if they really wanted to!. Adopt a Station is a great idea. Encourage communities to use unused space for eg bookshops like Pitlochry or community-run cafes where these no longer exist. Have space for local displays of projects. Encourage projects which link to railways in some way (eg the ARCH project in the Highlands).

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

Q28 comments: Those proposed in the consultation document make sense. However, it did not address manned/unmanned and opening hours. Where stations are unmanned there must be ticket machines which will sell ALL tickets (eg a present, there is no ticket machine at Dingwall station, and we are unable to buy a flexi-pass on the train).

### **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: Cross-border services can be desirable where they provide direct connects for long distance – eg Inverness to London (see above Q16). If you are using the argument that this detracts from ScotRail subsidy – well presumably the direct services price according to their own rules, and there is nothing to stop making Scotrail only services cheaper – and therefore perhaps increasing demand on 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: No. See above Q29. Most cross-border already terminate there (or Glasgow), so you are only talking about the Aberdeen, Dundee and Inverness trains. We would prefer to have the option of direct services south too.

### **Rolling stock**

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

Q31 comments: no useful comments. Replacement with electric trains would seem to have the advantage of providing cheaper running costs – so clearly these are a preferred option. But if our rural routes are not going to be electrified, we need to upgrade the existing stock – especially since these are our tourist lines.

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

Q32 comments: It is **essential** to get some stock with good toilets on the train services which tourists use. The toilets on the trains to and within the north are a disgrace – water sloshes everywhere, often the doors don't lock. What sort of a message does this give?

For commuter services – and indeed elsewhere – it would be good to have some stock which would allow flexibility to add a single carriage if needed. At present it seems that there is only the option to have a 2 or 3 carriage addition.

All trains should have full disable access.

More bike space provision. This also is tourist and commuter potential.

Luggage space obviously needed more on tourist routes than commuting 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: Mobile phone to me is not a priority. If you are in a spot without reception, it usually is not that long before coming into reception. Wi-fi is undeniably useful and desirable to have.

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 is only .6% of ticket sales. If there is not enough seating, then it makes sense to prioritise for standard and forget first class. Certainly for commuter trains it doesn't make sense to have first class (especially since commuters by definition are not on the train for all that long).

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

Q35 comments: I have no problems with a ban on alcohol on trains, but it will certainly not be popular! There will also inevitably be people taking alcohol in other containers. Who gets the task to police this?

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

Q36 comments: The ScotRail website really needs improving! It is difficult to get information (eg bargain berths on the sleeper, or even the fares on the sleeper for the that matter). I always go to my local station because it is clearer, faster and the stationmaster takes the time to find the information. So a revamp of the website to make it faster and clearer is needed. The signage at stations has improved, but is essential for unmanned or reduced hours. On board signage on the trains is useful – though it has to be said that for some with request stops (eg Kyle line), the information is often wrong. This is not ideal on a tourist route! Better information when things go wrong is certainly needed too.

### **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, you should specify sleeper services, and not leave it to a train operating company. I feel very, very strongly about keeping the Highland sleeper services going. For those of us in Inverness, Aberdeen, Fort William it is a real lifeline service. It is the most convenient for getting to London (better than flying if you want a full day in London), and environmentally far better than flying. This is my preferred way of going from Inverness to London.

It is also more fun, and has been the high point of many a trip with children. For those of us coming from the Highlands, budget hotels are not an alternative – and the idea of a sleeper bus is laughable. The consultation document mentions increased competition from faster daytime trains – but



again that is only relates to sleeper services from the Central Belt. If any sleeper services have to go (and I hope they won't), the ones from the Central belt should be sacrificed, replaced with very early services leaving to get to London for 9am.

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: I have no strong feelings on this, as long as the sleeper is run, and not priced out of use. It should still be regulated.

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 love the Highland sleeper. As mentioned above, more early and late trains won't help the Highland service. Inverness and Aberdeen are essential services. I can't comment about the merits of Oban vs Fort William.

The existing stock is undeniably shabby. Charging more for new services is risky. If you price them too high, people will use alternatives such as air travel. I think that putting resources into ensuite accommodation is the wrong approach. Get the basic issues of beds, noise and temperature sorted. Smoother starts and braking would also be a plus. A larger cafe car also, since this often gets filled.

I truly believe that part of the problem is marketing. The sleeper is a great way to travel. As mentioned above, it is perfect for children, often the high point of the journey. Tourists often don't know it exists – and if they do, it is hard to get pricing information on the website; I have had visitors from the States struggle to find it. (Even an experienced user like myself still has problems finding the bargain berth pages). But it has real tourist potential, without the hassles of air travel (baggage restrictions, queuing etc). With good refurbished rolling stock and a good marketing campaign, which in part targets people with environmental concerns and families, I'm convinced that the Highland sleeper would be popular and used more heavily.

## **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: Yes, go for waste reduction and recycling targets. Rubbish is collected on the trains – have one bag for recyclables and one for landfill. And all new rolling stock should have energy efficiency as part of the brief.