

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: The standard GB franchise appears to have operated satisfactorily over quite a few years now and I see no reason to change it, provided the obligation to keep all lines open with a minimum specified level of service is made clear in the franchise document. All potential franchisees would have to accept the package as a whole, including uneconomic social services. The involvement of community groups in the latter is best achieved by the groups voting with their feet; if demand increases (on any line) there should be a mechanism within the franchise to ensure that an appropriately improved service is provided.

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

Q2 comments: Franchisees should be encouraged to take a long-term view and a minimum of 10 or more years would seem appropriate.

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

Q3 comments: While agreeing in general with the philosophy of para. 3.26, I am not qualified to comment further.

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

Q4 comments: While there should certainly be a profit-share mechanism I am not qualified to comment further.

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

Q5 comments: This is a tricky area with the strong possibility of scaring off potential franchisees; I do not feel qualified to comment further.

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

Q6 comments: I am not qualified to comment.

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

Q7 comments: Existing practice should provide a guide; I do not feel qualified to comment further.

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

Q8 comments: Existing practice should provide a guide; I do not feel qualified to comment further.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Both mechanisms should be used.

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: An equal level of performance should be expected on all routes.

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

Q11 comments: The present 92% PPM target appears reasonable.

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

Q12 comments: This is best left to the franchisee, working within specified minimum levels. I agree with 5.12 but am unhappy with 5.14.

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: I feel we have enough "regimes" as it is.

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

Q14 comments: No comment.

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 present 10 minutes appears reasonable.

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 agreeing with 5.18, my response to this is definitely No; rail passengers are no different from air passengers; a direct service is always preferable. In fact it is even more important for rail travellers, who have to handle their own baggage at interchanges, a point which appears to have been missed.

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: Better to be determined by the franchisee, except for a minimum service requirement on rural routes.

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

Q18 comments: Targeted specification.

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

Q19 comments: Anything which would make more profit for the franchisee; not very helpful, I admit.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: The fares basket system appears reasonable and should not impinge much on passengers. A simpler **ticket** range is however highly desirable ***and must be on a UK-wide basis to avoid passenger confusion.***

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: see answer to Q.20

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: Applying higher fare increases to lines where recent enhancements have been made is putting the cart before the horse; all budgeting should be done before embarking on expenditure. An RPI basis should be retained instead of CPI. Taxpayer subsidy should be based on passenger convenience, ***not political views***.

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 agree with 6.28. Just what the difference should be I do not know, but I think it does encourage off-peak travel.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Most rural stations in sparsely populated areas will have to be kept open for social reasons. Strangely, it is in some urban areas that economies could be made. For example, it appears to me that mistakes were made in establishing the Queen St. - Maryhill - Anniesland service, where Summerston and Gilshochill are far too close together, likewise Possilpark and Ashfield, all of them, by my observation, very lightly used.

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: No comment - but see response to Q.27.

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: It would seem desirable that one organisation is responsible; however, it has to be asked if dual responsibility is the case elsewhere and

whether lessons can be learnt from other areas of the UK?

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

Q27 comments: Some stations (Gleneagles and Perth come to mind) appear to have considerable accommodation no longer needed for railway purposes. Could local authorities (or the private sector) not utilise this and dispose of some current buildings? It would also encourage staff to commute by rail.

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

Q28 comments: This proposal is totally unnecessary. Passengers have already decided to travel from A to B; they are not going to alight at an intermediate C when they have a ticket to B. Station facilities are already included in Scotrail timetables. The fact that the word "Principal" has been replaced by "Principle" (which of course has a totally different meaning) casts an interesting light on the literacy of all of those who checked the document before publication. (That a spellchecker would not pick this up is completely irrelevant)

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: For a document which purports to put passengers first, this is an extraordinary question. As commented earlier, long-distance rail passengers have to handle their own baggage, so changing trains has to be minimised. It is obvious that a train with a capacity suitable for the high numbers of inter-city travellers in England will become emptier when it reaches rural Scotland, but this effect applies to many Scotrail services too; Glasgow to Aberdeen services are much quieter north of Dundee. The specious financial argument put forward is totally unquantified, (what proportion would it be of total subsidy?) In any case this proposal is totally against the interests of passengers.

Regardless of politics, Scotland and England are one landmass, so one overall authority should specify such services, the Department of Transport.

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: An even more astonishing question. What extra "opportunities for Scottish connections" would this give when all existing through trains to Aberdeen etc. call at Edinburgh? This question can only be

described as nonsensical.

The arguments put forward for an "Edinburgh Hub" are highly spurious. e.g all services could not possibly be run by Scotrail, since East Coast would still require access. Apart from the constraints between it and Haymarket, Waverley appears to operate satisfactorily as it is, and will be even better when current Network Rail improvements are complete. There are no benefits accruing from an "Edinburgh Hub"

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Provision of rolling stock should be left in the hands of the franchisee, as at present.

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

Q32 comments: The current trolley/cafeteria arrangement is acceptable, although healthier choices should be made available, e.g. plain biscuits as well as chocolate covered. On no account should alcoholic beverages be served and it should be an offence for passengers to take them on board, with train staff taking a pro-active role.

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: Train passengers do not require any additional provision over whatever is available to the public living/working beside the line. Indeed, in a nil reception area, train passengers will inevitably not have long to wait for a connection. High band-width services are a low 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: This should be left to the franchisee, to whom additional seating capacity is as important as to the public.

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

Q35 comments: See comments on Q32. The issues are of course nuisance to other passengers and the health of the imbiber. I am in favour of a complete ban (UK wide) on the drinking of alcohol on trains - and stations.

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

Q36 comments: Passenger information has been much improved in recent years and the way most train staff try to keep passengers informed of any delays is highly commendable.

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: They should continue to be specified, provided demand continues.

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 am not qualified to comment.

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 have not used a sleeper service for many years, but should I have occasion to do so, would probably be prepared to pay more for better facilities (but not for a suite!) The present destinations appear correct.

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: Not qualified to comment.