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:Profit-making routes should be attractive to operators on an economic basis, allowing them to respond to passenger demand, but less profitable journeys and many rural routes would, I expect, require the social model to safeguard services.

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

Q2 comments: Longer contracts may well be more attractive to operators, but there needs to be robust specification and enforcement of service levels. It would be a disservice to the public were an operator to be allowed to provide a substandard service.

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

Q3 comments: No comment

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

Q4 comments: No comment

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

Q5 comments: No commen

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

Q6 comments:No comment

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:Ultimately loss of contract.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments:I suspect a combination of the two, but I have no experience in this area.

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: No route should be allowed to fall far below specified performance levels.

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

Q11 comments: On-time arrival at intermediate stations is just as important as at final destination. Intermediate stops are final destinations for many passengers and are especially important when changing trains.

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

Q12 comments: I feel journey times could be increased if this improves reliability and leads to fewer changes of train.

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: All aspects are important and should be covered by specifications in contracts.

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

Q14 comments: There could be a website allowing passengers and potential passengers to feed back directly to the relevant Government department. (Some potential passengers may wish to say why they do not or cannot travel by train.)

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 standing time should be considered acceptable, although this may be unachievable in practice. Overcrowding is not something which need be solved only by the railway industry, however. People could live nearer their place of work or work more from home, and employers could stagger working hours.

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: Most definitely not! Meeting connections is a stressful experience. It tends to happen most on longer journeys when passengers have more luggage and often children. Many tickets are valid only on specified services and missed connections are a real possibility. Changing trains is a disincentive to travelling by rail. Where trains meet other modes, e.g. bus, there needs to be better co-ordination between operators. (I have a local issue here.)

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: These probably need to be specified in contracts for less profitable routes, but there may be scope for less control on profitable routes where there are more passengers to make the demands.

18. What level of contract specification should we use the 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: Reward for good feedback ? (See Question 14)

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Fares policy should continue to attempt to move passengers away from peak times to assist in overcoming capacity issues and to shift transport to more environmentally sustainable modes. (But see my comments on Q15.)

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: I believe all fares should be regulated, especially on "social" routes as previously defined. Rail fares in the Strathclyde area are noticeably cheaper than here on the East coast. It also needs to be much clearer what is a "permitted route".

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: It must cost more to have so many different bodies involved in provding the train service – Network Rail, Rolling Stock Leasing Companies, Train Operating Companies – each with its own management costs and (except NR) profit requirements. Perhaps a major restructuring is required?

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:The present differential certainly discourages me from using peak time services. But again see my comments on Q15.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:The biggest problem with railway stations is that they have to be on the railway! Consideration should be given to provsion of stations near major housing developments (as happened at Dalgety Bay). It does seem unrealistic to keep a station open for only 20 passengers a week, but those passengers, I expect, would disagree. I don't have an answer to this.

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: Merits – local response to local needs with less cost to railway. Issues – more complexity, possibly conflicting demands. But if a third party can do it why can't the railway?

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: Most stations (not just in Scotland) are very obviously run by the TOC, but there needs to be a permanent "landlord" to maintain control with a view to future requirements by possibly different "tenants". In the present strucure Network Rail would seem to be the appropriate body.

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

Q27 comments: Initiatives as desribed in paragraphs 7.23 and 7.24 do help. Safeguards need to be in place to give protection in the event of a change of franchisee.

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

Q28 comments: The suggestions in paragraphs 7.28 to 7.35 seem reasonable. I would just add that a draughty bus shelter on a rainswept platform is no substitute for a real waiting room.

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 should continue north of Edinburgh, and should be specfed jointly by DoT and Scottish Ministers. See my earlier comments on changing trains and on Question 30.

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: See my earlier comments on changing trains. One of the long distance journeys I make from time to time is Leuchars to Cambridge, which used to involve only one change of train at Peterborough. This is more difficult now that the 0920 service from Leuchars no longer stops at Peterborough and would be even worse if I had to change at Edinburgh too.   We already have an Edinburgh hub to a large extent. Waverley is a big station, and connection times are often tight. Haymarket is a very noisy and uncomfortable station. I see no benefit whatsover in making it even harder to avoid changing trains in Edinburgh.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: There need to be fewer companies involved, i.e. fewer levels of ownership and leasing.

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

Q32 comments: a) Comfortable seats – at present only the Voyager fleet can claim to have these, although the HSTs were even better until they were refurbished under GNER – sufficient for all passengers at normal loadings. b) Low noise levels – Class 158 are noisy. c) Catering on longer journeys (say over 2 hours' duration), preferably a buffet car or shop. This needs to be available to the whole train, not only in one part of a 5 or 6 coach train. d) Toilets on all trains, clean and functioning (First Scotrail are not bad at this.) e) Luggage space for light and heavy items, located so that passengers can keep an eye on their luggage. f) Accessible member of staff able to assist with any problems. All except catering are important on all journeys.

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: I feel that mobile 'phone availabilty is a matter for the mobile 'phone companies. I have no personal desire for Internet access while travelling. I do like my pocket GPS receiver to work, however.

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: I do not believe that provision of first-class accommodation should take priority over adequate seating provision for all passengers. Some train crews will open up first-class seating to standard-class passengers when there are insufficient seats – this should be standard practice.

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 enjoy a drink myself, but I would be happy to see an alcohol ban on all trains at all times as journeys are sometimes spolied by those who have had too much. But how much is sold on-train and how much is brought on by passengers as luggage and/or already consumed?

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

Q36 comments On-train information displays need to be reliable. Too often they lose track of the train's postition and give incorrect information. Some non-automated announcements are almost inaudible or unintelligible, sometimes due to equipment differences in different coaches, often due to other passengers, and sometimes due to poor enunciation by the train crew.

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: As one who has used the sleeper service only twice and found it nearly impossible to sleep I have no opinion on this.

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: Again, no 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: No comment.

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: Waste sent to landfill, carbon emissions, road and air journeys saved.