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: The dual-focus approach would seem the most appropriate mechanism with the Economic format applied to the Inter-City and Cross-Border routes where reasonable and practical, though subject to regulation, and given social support where necessary. The latter is likely to arise on an individual service basis. For example, 04:50 departures from key points (i.e. Virgin from Glasgow Central) are not going to be viable but the taxpayer should not support them as they are operated primarily to suit the TOC being generally too early, unusable and inaccessible for most of the public. Many community routes would fall into the social element with less popular times needing that back-up. The merits of dual focus within a single franchise should mean a simplification of overall management and availability of assets/people, though the two arrangements will need to be quite different. The multiple franchises approach has in general been discredited, shown to be ineffective, not passenger orientated, exemplified by failures to maintain connections, and overall more costly.

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

Q2 comments: 15 years would seem a good working compromise. Within that period there should be clauses that allow periodic review (3-5 yrs) and potential for termination where there is poor performance and disinterest and on the contrary, scope for extension for positive leadership to improve services. For such a period there should be an expectation of investment/risk taking by the franchisee that is not necessarily enshrined in contract. Any decisions of termination/extension should be predicated by active passenger involvement. (See Qu. 6).

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

Q3 comments: Risk support mechanisms should be incorporated such as a sharing of profits/losses following any significant changes in circumstances but carefully crafted to ensure that a franchisee's over optimistic expectations are not left for the tax-payer to pick-up by default. One should expect that franchisees are not there solely to "milk the franchise" but to have responsibility and a genuine desire to demonstrate public service.

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

Q4 comments: Not sufficiently competent to comment on this beyond question 3.

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

Q5 comments: Where a franchisee is not showing initiative and drive to develop the services there should be scope for a third party to enter the frame including the use of directly competing services. The absence of the latter has been a failing of the rail privatisation framework with consequential absence of improvements in some arenas. Franchise terms should require improvements to many service parameters, (minimal frequencies, speeds/overall journey time taken, fares, quality of stock, station environment etc.), where necessary. The franchise holder should not be allowed to dictate terms such as precluding

certain stops by competitors at prime node points as has been applied to competitors on the East Coast routes. In turn, the third party could in effect develop a niche that ultimately could but may not necessarily be incorporated into the main franchise.

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

Q6 comments: Not sufficiently competent to comment on this.

Note: A dedicated Passenger Focus group should be devised specifically for Scotland with the power to make recommendations to franchisees and some authority to effect improvements.

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

Q7 comments: Not sufficiently competent to comment on this

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

Q8 comments: Severe financial with removal of a franchise as a last option.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: There should be scope for incentivising both good and improving sloppy performance. Conversely, penalties should apply to continual poor or deteriorating performance but the passenger should be central in approving or rejecting such incentives. The complexity of the privatisation framework means it will remain challenging to pinpoint the root causes of poor performance amongst the partners, against a background of inherent, excessive and rising costs.

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: The regime should be aligned with individual routes; performance in one should not be used to over-ride another irrespective of it's direction. However, it must be recognised that the franchisee is not in complete control of the destiny, for example Network Rail must provide good quality/reliable infrastructure to enable trains to operate to their full potential. Similarly, that dependency should not be seen as an excuse fallback by the franchisee.

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

Q11 comments: Performance should be directly aligned to train running at each calling station, but likewise there should be no timetable padding (performance allowance) for the convenience of the operators. Schedules should reflect typical good running and not artificially enhanced to accommodate the myriad of excuses used to offset sloppiness. If time is required to avoid conflicting movements it should be incorporated and shown in timetables by slightly longer times at stations. (The practice of unrealistic concurrent arrival and departure times is unacceptable).

The objective should be to run trains as fast as possible without prejudicing safety. Similarly the practice of each train having equal weight in priority has to stop. This is illustrated by a

slightly late or early fast train becoming stuck behind a slower service, for example the ubiquitous extensive crawling by Virgin Trains' London to Glasgow service on the West Coast route west of Carstairs; common sense is clearly not used in such a scenario. Why save time by running at 125 mph only to lose it by such checks – a horrendous and criminal waste of resource. (We need HS2 in Scotland now).

A dedicated Passenger Focus Group (Scotland) with significant customer membership empowered to show direction and leadership would be a mechanism to meet outlined aims. This body could serve the myriad of passenger issues beyond those focussed in the above response.

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

Q12 comments: See question 11; the drive should be to reduce journey time, eliminate timetable padding and typical sloppy regulation in order to minimise penalty payments. Overall, start point to final destination times are a critical factor when assessing which transport mode to utilise, not just that from station to station which is only a part, albeit one of the most relevant, in the decision equation.

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 yes are the short answers. The various parameters of service quality should be reflected within the franchise management agreement. Incentivisation should operate on being earned but additionally, there should be scope for service enhancement beyond anything described contractually. However, it can only operate for the franchisee where they have full control and not where issues are the subject of another party's responsibility. Rewards can be sanctioned where attempts have been made to improve beyond the franchisee's remit. A close and specific passenger view of ScotRail rather than Britain wide, would seem an obvious approach to determine performance.

Passenger compensation should reflect the damage done by delivery failure. On one occasion, having lost 3 days work that was not recoverable because of ScotRail's inability to manage an incident and in turn pay adequate compensation, as a passenger I am very reluctant to trust them again. This of course flies in the face of mode switch.

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

Q14 comments: Ask the passenger on all facets not just those outlined in any franchise terms. Thus passengers and not just those in first-class, should be asked for their views and to give some justification for their comments when outlining good/bad performance. Performance is not just about times, comfort and fares, but the whole journey experience; I've never been asked!!

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: A carrying capacity measure should be employed. The need to stand during a journey should be minimised irrespective of time of day. However, a degree of flexibility is inevitable particularly following disruption, failures etc. A maximum standing time of 10' is more than enough, notably when a service is crush loaded as happens from time to time and which could then become a foreseeable health and safety issue on many counts; that cannot be ignored. Services which are too heavily loaded preclude the constructive use of travel time and will drive clientele to other modes, counter to the aims of *Scotland's Railways* and a notable backward step. The answer is more capacity in terms of additional seats and longer trains, perhaps with restricted door opening for shorter platforms and additional infrastructure

enhancements such as passing loops, grade segregation and less conflicting crossings.

Specific stock dedicated to certain service types is a useful approach as demonstrated by the rush-hour Fife circle trains, notwithstanding that being of higher quality than most of ScotRail's current coaches, these should be more widely employed. Trains idle in depots at rush-hours should also be independently questioned.

The seats issue is pertinent, 2+3 seating is not popular and regularly the middle seat is unoccupied despite folks standing. The seat widths are a contributing factor here whilst a coach laid out in a "*pack as many in as possible*" is not a 21st century expectation and a distinct disincentive to rail travel.

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: Unquestionably not, quite the converse. A combination of regular interval, fast, limited stop trains should be supported by connecting stopping services for intermediate stations/transfer portals. A Policy of reducing direct/through services, substituted by promoting a greater number of changes, will be counter-productive to the declared aim of encouraging mode switch. However, Swiss style patterns will obviously promote greater patronage, as well demonstrated there, and give the public confidence to use the service in contrast to the perceptions of many non rail-users. Advertised connections must be maintained, not as so often happens they are not held when there is, say, late running, typically exemplified by different organisations who are more concerned with not being penalised rather than offering a public service (profits before people/service comes to mind!!!).

Why do the Helensburgh/Milngavie to Edinburgh services not run through to North Berwick/Dunbar perhaps splitting/joining at Edinburgh during quiet periods? The principles espoused to Question 29 also apply.

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: A co-operative approach between both parties should apply allowing service development where the operators see an opportunity against a back drop of minimisation/need set by government. Targeted specification is the way forward. Regular and predictable frequency is critical but that will vary with the time and nature of the day and of connecting services irrespective of mode. Timetable padding for the convenience of the operator and exemplified by the Glasgow – Edinburgh via Carstairs Cross-Country (/East Coast) Services should be eliminated.

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

Q18 comments: As intimated in Q17, a targeted contract specification should apply, Option 3.

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

Q19 comments: Incentives should be in place for service enhancement above the minimum by perhaps a sharing of "real" costs or net revenue, the potential for franchise extension and perhaps some form of **reasonable** bonus. In contrast, failure or half-hearted approach to service improvement should result in penalties to the franchisee.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments:

The rationale of the fares policy should be directed at maximising rail use for so many reasons, albeit recognising that overcrowding is a total disincentive. The objective of incentivising modal shift is highly laudable and needs to be repeatedly demonstrated by actions. However, it should be recognised that a person's use of rail for journeys is very much directed by influences beyond their control - e.g. business/study dictates, hospital appointments, family matters – and they should not be penalised where they have no obvious control.

Further, the complexity of fares is highly confusing and needs substantial simplification. Exploring the internet to find the best value for money fare whilst confirming the validity of an individual ticket, can take several hours and that cannot be a justifiable use of time and does turn many potential travellers away from rail travel. With Britain's rail fares now well known as the most expensive in Europe, the extortionate approach to "Turn Up And Go" (TUAG) tariffs must be eliminated now. Thus TUAG ticket prices should closely match internet prices. Individuals should not be penalised because they have not booked 12 hrs earlier just to suit the operator, particularly where a service is likely to operate at well below capacity anyway. The book in advance systems currently in place do not give any consideration to customer preferences, the customer has no choice of seat, he/she has to accept what is given (take it or leave it), perhaps having to travel in one of the worst possible seats such as backwards, without a window, in a dark part of the carriage, without a table, shoved up against somebody else's luggage and possibly separated from travelling companions or family having experienced all these shortcomings – its not good enough and another disincentive towards rail travel. Further, on some services un-reservable seats should at least equate to 40% of capacity, not as now significantly less. A final point here is that not everyone has access or the desire to use the internet, why should they be penalised? The example of ticket anomalies should also apply to Cross-Border services.

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: Based upon a principle of maximising rail travel, unquestionably all fares should be regulated at least as a maximum per mile across the system irrespective of day/time though there may be variations with route and the quality of the stock provided. However, the operators should have the capacity and be directed (incentivised) to reduce that level and not automatically allowed to employ the maximum threshold, typically employed for TUAG tickets. With a few Cross-Border exceptions, there is effectively absolutely minimal direct competition between operators on a route rendering no incentive to reduce fares. In the absence of direct competition, the rip-off "market" is sustained. The Edinburgh-Glasgow corridor is a classic example with 4 routes but of very different character and quality and thus an effective absence of competition. Overall fares do not fall indicating that the market principle is not protecting the fare-payer.

The Consultation Document (CD) recognises the effects of de-regulation which could well cause operators to grossly inflate fares and defeat the objective of modal shift to rail. Thus full deregulation of inter-city fares risks substantial rises and sends the wrong message.

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: The current UK government policy of raising fares significantly above the rate of inflation is wrong except perhaps for first class where there is an optional element. Fare rises should be restricted to inflation but subject to a full justification reviewed by an independent body which will include a strong user representation. The use of transport modes has a profound effect on the rest of society with the road lobby and aircraft industries not paying for the total damage they cause for example. The use of rail particularly where

electrified is far more beneficial to the greater good of the broader community and that should be reflected in the calculations of fares; that is not the case with the proposals currently being pursued by the Coalition Government. Further, the issue of rail industry inefficiencies and managerial salary greed needs to be tackled before further fare rises can be justified.

Enhancements should not automatically deliver a fare premium; if they do by the same token the product prior to that upgrade will clearly have been very substandard and the passengers have had to endure insult or other inadequate performance and are due a refund. A purported aim of the authorities is to effect mode transfer to rail for the good of civilisation, excessive fare rises will have the opposite effect and once again we will see people priced off the railway, a policy well used by BR at the behest of governments.

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: In principle, individuals should not be penalised because they have to travel at certain times which are beyond their control. Nevertheless, an incentive in the form of a 20%-33% reduction for use at the less busy times makes sense as does further reductions for the very quiet times, such as early morning and evening travel, but also reflect the distance travelled. A journey that would not be possible out-with peak times such as the Central belt to the far South of England or Carlisle to Wick and variations there-of, should not be punished by higher fares, but optional short journeys which involve the peak hours, say within a city suburb when not necessary, should reflect a higher fare. Concurrently, other modes should be similarly penalised, such as higher parking charges in shopping centres nationally where rail is a reasonable option. Reduced rate season tickets are one mechanism for protecting those who need to travel in the peaks compared to the optional traveller although they in turn penalise those who cannot purchase the longest time periods. Shoulder peak pricing is an option that could be applied to season tickets more readily than one-off ticketing but its regulation may be challenging.

Additionally, it should be possible to purchase reduced-rate season tickets which are currently not available, such as the Strathclyde Concession scheme which is essentially a TUAG product.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Such a determination should be a function of actual and potential usage and availability of alternatives on the one hand but also the inconvenience and redirection to other less environmentally sustainable modes and other prohibitions that closure might cause. A further round of Beeching type closures should never be countenanced; notably so many of such closures have been reversed and that is likely to continue as people travel more. Variable train stopping patterns could be more readily applied and Park and Ride schemes should be further developed.

Additional stations, rationalisation or relocation of others are all armaments in a strategy, subject to the above constraints. Further, bus services should be feeders and directed to call at stations whilst out of town shopping centres should not be approved in the absence of a local station where practicable (i.e. not 5 miles away).

One station that might be semi-redundant is Hillfoot, though it is heavily used for commuting in the rush hours, albeit <10 mins walk from Bearsden; perhaps open in rush hours only?? Alternatively, the two could be rationalised. Car parking without spare capacity is an issue throughout this branch on weekdays. Similarly there would appear to be scope for rationalisation of the newly opened Anniesland – Glasgow Queen Street service although through running to Milngavie or Dalmuir might be more cost effective and of greater benefit particularly once Queen Street is electrified.

On very rural lines with sparse populations inevitably lines are unlikely to be viable but they serve a vital social role. Very limited services will be counter-productive as demonstrated so

many times in the past. Stronger promotional mechanisms should be employed - why not ask the potential clientele what they want?

A final point, the fiasco of new arrangements at Stranraer for the ferry terminal moving to Cairn Ryan without a nearby railway station is a classic example of what not to do. In 2012 as a general principle construction of a suitable station should have been a condition of the arrangements albeit challenging in this particular example where we see the promotion of yet more road travel.

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: Absolutely, third party contributions should be actively encouraged; however, that mechanism should not be used to enable central government and the rail management authorities from abrogating responsibility to enhance the network. Third parties may have greater determination, drive and vigour to see a development through to enhance the traveller's experience. Likewise, volunteer groups take up a project often because they are so ashamed or incensed that those with the real responsibility have failed to deliver. That is not good enough and the responsible party should be forced financially to make good any shortfalls. In contrast, over fanciful ideas and poor viability practice, need to be weeded out by a regulatory body that should include passenger representation.

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: There should be an overall lead manager appointed to and be responsible for stations but its revenue sourcing should not be restricted to its host organisation. That organisation should not necessarily be the franchisee but the latter should certainly be contracted to take a reasonable share of the costs; it is in their interests to promote a welcoming environment and they will certainly grab any profits that accrue and thus should be responsible for downside costs. Funds should be pooled such that the ridiculous example of the wall quoted in the CD cannot arise being an example of the nonsense thrown up by the privatisation process we have been lumbered with.

The franchisee could be encouraged to improve the assets but compensated for the investment at the end of the franchise if necessary and appropriate.

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

Q27 comments: Firstly, by ensuring Local Authorities adopt the same level of responsibilities they have to other services. Secondly, by promoting and encouraging local community rail partnerships which have been so successful elsewhere and perhaps by giving participants some form of loyalty type fare reductions in return, in effect an enhanced development of the Station Community Project.

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

Q28 comments: Question is unclear, what is meant by designated?

Note: The absence of car-parking, both in terms of costs and capacity, at primary terminal stations such as Glasgow Central should be eliminated as very early departures or late arrivals do not connect with local services, the latter will not have started or will have finished, meaning in my experience, travellers use their cars for a complete journey rather than using rail services for the bulk distance. Cost of car parking for such services could be offset by ticket reductions rather than just a revenue source; difficult to regulate but could be done.

Gates at stations are a further disincentive to rail travel and a backward step and cannot be justified. They cause excessive queues, delays and potential public order and safety issues

are likely to arise; gate access/egress often leads to a shambles for the passenger. Gates are just further hassle for the traveller that will turn people away from rail as demonstrated for air-travel. Further, it is now not possible to access a platform to see somebody off or alternatively to meet "Granny". The use of discretion by staff on barrier duty is never applied. The staff utilised could be much more productively employed on train either selling tickets or helping passengers with their journeys. I have seen a minimum of 4 to as many as 10 staff at Glasgow Central on "gate duty" and it is unlikely they will have recovered their costs – get rid of gates as soon as possible – now.

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: As a generalisation, Cross-Border services **must be developed, most certainly NOT contracted or cease at Edinburgh**. The need to change services is a gross disincentive to rail use and will only result in transfer to other modes or prevent travel altogether with the consequential additional costs to society in general. The wretched bustitution seen during the agony of "engineering works" to rail services, classically illustrates this point. Affected parties are all types of traveller, business, leisure, the aged, and the young, those nervous of rail travel and particularly tourists whether UK citizens or foreign nationals. Try travelling from Glasgow to Bristol or beyond with the intense hassle of changing at Birmingham for example particularly with heavy luggage? Replication of that scenario at Edinburgh will avidly turn people away from rail travel in total, not just for a journey north of the Central Belt, or they will go to other countries rather than Scotland where there is a more enlightened approach, thus damaging the UK's tourist industry. There needs to be (i) a curtailment of internal flights, with slots made available for international transits, and (ii) road travel; loss of through trains will only exacerbate the issues.

Development should see increased services from across the UK to the major cities of Scotland beyond the Central belt serving, say, Stirling, Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness. A later morning service from Inverness to Birmingham and beyond via Glasgow, an overnight sleeper service to the South-West (see sleeper section) and quality services from such cities and particularly the Central Belt to Manchester are examples screaming for introduction. On the latter, First Trans-Pennine's suburban DMUs on the Edinburgh/Glasgow – Manchester route are poor and a further turn off for use being significantly less inviting than the loco-hauled services they replaced. Why not transfer some of Virgin Trains London – Scotland services via Manchester rather than Warrington, (but not those dreaded Voyager units), its an obvious move serving several travel flows? Additional benefits are that currently, there is a limited element of direct competition for ScotRail from Cross-Border services, the latter providing the far higher quality travelling environment; (see Qu. 30).

ScotRail and Cross-Border services should act as mutual feeders as well as providing a degree of direct competition. Service specification should be a joint partnership between the two administrations, as citizens from both states will benefit provided the service is promoted to succeed. A change of motive power, electric to diesel and vice-versa, may be required but that is not an inhibition where managed positively and achievable in <5 mins. (Note: see train quality section elsewhere).

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: **Unquestionably NOT**; there will be minimal benefits but many disadvantages from such a short-sighted policy. Abstraction of passenger complement from Scot-Rail services, if any, i.e. that is a questionable point, (see below), reflects the far superior quality of the environment of the trains (HSTs, Pendolinos and sleepers) forming the Cross-Border services. This is one limited example of direct competition in the rail industry and the operators should grasp it. In my experience, many Cross-Border services are well used and

do not have significant excess capacity, in contrast to the statement in the CD, which is inaccurate. As a recent example, the substitution of Cross-Country 4 coach Voyager trains for East-Coast services between Edinburgh and Glasgow just after 17:00 hrs has been a disaster, the service is now regularly very overcrowded and leads to more "diesels under the wires" – what a shameful and ill judged decision that needs rectification.

As a further example, the virtual complete loss of East-Coast services from Glasgow to the South-East corner of England has been a real backward step and has promoted my use of alternative travel modes for such journeys. Revision to departures from Glasgow Central at say, 08:00, 13:00 and 17:00 hrs to Kings Cross and reciprocal northbound services would be a big bonus and far more productive than the current effectively useless arrangements; the 06:50 southbound from Glasgow Central being inaccessible to most Glaswegians. The Edinburgh hub scenario proposed would be another disaster, there are not "some possible drawbacks" but fundamental and major shortcomings of such an approach. (See Qu. 29).

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: As part of an overall strategy, (i) refurbishments, re-engineering and life extension of stock including reliability enhancements/redundancy to higher standards (e.g. HST, other Mark 3 and Mark 4 stock) rather than unnecessary purchase of new vehicles of a generally much inferior quality should be the way forward where possible. (Note: The Mark 3 stock designed in the 1970s, when refurbished to modern standards is very well liked and remains the best stock on Britain's railways by orders of magnitude). Under that approach 35 years does not seem to be a limit as we see much older stock used in the UK and Europe. (ii) Transport Scotland should consider purchasing their own stock (or having a much greater input into the final product rather than leaving it to a ROSCO), while loco-haulage would undoubtedly deliver a better quality coach and more comparable to a modern car. (iii) extended electrification as projected.

Note: Acquisition of surplus Mark-3 stock from Irish railways, suitably re-engineered and refurbished to modern standards, for use on Scottish Inter-City services would be a real bonus and sure of gaining additional custom; they could be used for the next 20years. As part of the package, there are plenty of relatively new locomotives stored and/or under utilised that could be refurbished/re-engineered to act in push-pull sets, (that could be of variable length dependant on passenger complement), and provide a far superior travelling environment than currently.

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

Q32 comments: Inter-City services on the routes Carlisle/Berwick-on-Tweed-Glasgow-Edinburgh-Inverness and Aberdeen including Edinburgh-Glasgow core should have a high quality non claustrophobic type environment with room to enable one not to have to put one's chin on one's knees, buffet service, adequate/secure luggage space that means seats are freed rather than carrying cases and sufficient toilets (that work and don't smell). Currently, the HST sets from East Coast (matched only by the Mark-4 sets and other Mark-3 stock on selected services) are far far superior to any other train in the UK including Scot-Rail's class 170 DMU sets. ScotRail's 334 or 380 sets are an improvement on the latter, but short of inter-city standards. A quality environment enables one to use the travel experience far more productively than any other transport mode whether for work/business, leisure or relaxation with usable windows, comfort, eat/drink capacity etc. Some of Cross-Country's HST sets are as good but that dreadful Voyager family of trains should be scrapped as totally unsuitable for longer distance inter-city type travel. These points are emphasised as the quality of the travelling environment is critical in any selection of travel mode. Use of Mark-3 and Mark-4 stock suitably refurbished on the longer inter-city routes will certainly enhance ridership.

For suburban services, the 380 and 334 sets are good though the latter suffer from the 2+3 "pack-em-in" crush mode, rather than an extra coach; this is the 21st Century not the 1880s. A major refurbishment of the suburban sets would seem to be called for whether diesel or electric, with transfer of the 170 units to the West Highland and Far North group and rural lines in general. It is hoped the new electric sets for the EGIP come up to a suitable standard and we don't see further deterioration as experienced on that route in the late 1980s in the move from loco-hauled stock to suburban DMUs.

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: As a general comment on section 10, the travel mode chosen is not determined just by the time it takes to get from A to B but the whole journey experience and its environment. If the latter is ignored travellers will turn away from rail travel to everyone's cost. Prevention of mobile 'phone use should be extended, we don't want to hear other people's private discussions, they are intrusive and extremely annoying to other users. Wi-Fi has a place, far more important than mobile 'phone use, but users race for the seats with tables of which there is a dearth, additional such usable tables should be introduced, the airline flap types are useless for most purposes. No other comment.

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: Limited first class services should remain but only for Inter-City type services – Cross-Border and the Edinburgh-Glasgow-Inverness- Aberdeen core; they are effectively redundant elsewhere.

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

Q35 comments: Risk of disruption to other passengers supported by a limiting of sales to an individual. Total elimination is not a good idea particularly when meals are being served. Note: Smoking inside stations remains the greater issue that needs resolution whilst similar difficulties are likely to arise with a ban on alcohol.

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

Q36 comments: Local staff should be supplied with accurate information for dissemination to passengers, rather than be the last to learn of issues when such information is clearly available at Control Centres following disruptions. Local staff often hide away when things go wrong much to the annoyance of the passenger who is frequently left high and dry and often having to suddenly make alternative arrangements to make their own way forward in an area they do not know – clearly not good enough. Additionally, on-train staff should also be kept informed and enabled to disseminate information regarding disruptions, in effect acting as ambassadors for the rail industry. Tackling these shortcomings will result in a significant improvement, having been marooned at Westerton so many times, (no buses or taxis available), when trying to complete a journey on the Milngavie branch.

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: **Absolutely**, continue to specify with significant improvements and extended services such as at least the Central Belt through to Birmingham and the South-West perhaps

as far as Exeter and Plymouth. Splitting and joining of trains should facilitate additional components such as from Aberdeen to Britain's second major city; there is a great deal that can be done to enhance the package and improve viability if there is the determination to make it happen. Comments to be read in conjunction with answers to Qus. 38 and 39.

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: Optional at this stage unless there is a known highly motivated organisation willing to rise to the challenges.

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 value of the Caledonian Sleepers is enormous allowing the saving of a day (or two) in travel. The current Caledonian Sleepers allow a reasonable night's rest but the opportunity for a full-day's activities including potential evening entertainment or further business, in certain circumstances, in the respective departure towns with a reasonable time of arrival at one's destination. The only real shortcoming in my experience is the lack of quality refreshment facilities for breakfast – not just fast food - at major terminal points. Early morning/late evening services would only partially meet that need whilst the practicality for their use is questionable; notably other support is frequently not available such as linking suburban services. Further, use of early/late services have the knock-on effect of tiredness on the individual, less of an issue for 20 somethings but a real burden for the more mature members of society.

Looking specifically at the various services, the Fort William route is perhaps the most vulnerable but its removal would distinctly damage the tourist industry. However, it does also serve the West Highland line where non-sleeper passengers can utilise the service north from Edinburgh (and reverse) but a well advertised rail connection (or Post-Bus type operation) from Crianlarich to Oban and timed to connect with ferries would enhance its value. Viability of the Inverness/Aberdeen trains could be enhanced if the same concept was applied by attaching/ detaching additional coaches at Edinburgh for services which in turn could substitute for local DMUs elsewhere.

Enhancement by improving the quality of stock whether new or extensive refurbishment is probably due, for example en-suite services and shower units are obvious examples, and I would be prepared to pay accordingly provided that cost is reasonable and not extortionate. On the other hand, younger people will be more prepared to "rough-it" so there needs to be scope to retain that clientele. Promotion of sharing cabins with strangers is unacceptable in 2012.

Attachment of a Motorail section would be extremely valuable.

Response should be read in conjunction with those to Qus. 37 and 38.

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 sufficiently competent to comment in more than general principles – reduce the environmental impact, more waste bins and recycling streams at stations, additional toilets at medium sized stations, more electrification of core routes.

Impact can be achieved by continuing to increase costs and application of fair taxes to alternative transport modes, typically air. Additionally, by directing certain organisations, such as excessively competing road transport – e.g. parcels, mail and other delivery services - to use rail for their core journeys between major nodes. That would significantly raise efficiencies and reduce pollution.