

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: I do not believe there is any merit in offering a dual focus franchise. The whole network needs to be operated as one system by one franchisee under one set of arrangements. If services are to be grouped I would adopt the following groups:

Cross Border and Sleeper Services (see Q29)

Scottish InterCity

North Highland

West Highland

South West Scotland

Glasgow Suburban / Regional

Edinburgh Suburban / Regional

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

Q2 comments: I believe Chiltern Rail with a very long franchise has been better incentivized than any other to develop its business and has produced excellent results. I believe that the next Scotrail franchise should be for at least 15 years.

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

Q3 comments: Revenue support should be available for the contracted level of service but the authority should insure itself against considerable extra costs by retaining the option to reduce the contracted level of service.

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

Q4 comments: The authority should introduce a profit share mechanism for profits above a certain level on the contracted service. The franchisee should be able to retain all profits on services provided beyond the contracted level. There are of course difficulties in accurately allocating revenue to particular services.

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

Q5 comments: I was under the impression that the UK legislation already provided for open access operators to operate services according to certain conditions. I believe there is relatively limited scope for open access operators within Scotland and any applications should offer something new and not extract traffic from the contracted service. In terms of something new I believe there are essentially two options on the existing network, new routes or tourist orientated "land cruise" operations perhaps in association with existing heritage railways. I believe there is scope for a Dundee – Perth – Cumbernauld – Motherwell service which might substantially improve connectivity between the north and the West Coast Main Line

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

Q6 comments: I do not feel qualified to comment in this area.

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

Q7 comments: I do not feel qualified to comment in this area.

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

Q8 comments: The franchise commitments should be measured in ways beyond the running of the contracted service to timetable and things such as rolling stock comfort, train length and suitability of railway station facilities should be taken into account. Sanctions that financially penalize the franchisee risk disincentivizing the franchisee and with the long franchise I would prefer to see franchise shortening should be a major sanction.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Both measures should be used. Sustained poor performance should be penalized with franchise shortening and sustained good performance should be rewarded with franchise extension.

10. Should the performance regime be aligned with actual routes or service groups, or should there be one system for the whole of Scotland?

Q10 comments: There should be a single network wide system. Anything less

would contribute to a less than network approach by the franchisee.

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

Q11 comments: By including in the performance measurement a range of relevant issues beyond simply running the contracted service to schedule. By way of example recently First Great Western blamed the late running and overcrowdedness of a service on the Six Nations Rugby match taking place in Cardiff and there being “too many passengers”. This is nonsense and any Scotrail franchisee should be expected to respond to expected differences in passenger loadings caused by special events.

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

Q12 comments: I believe schedule reliability is on balance more important than concentrating on speed but the franchisee must not be allowed to “massage” public timetables to artificially enhance performance along the lines of allowing ten minutes between scheduled departure from Haymarket and scheduled arrival in Waverley, the timetable must be realistic.

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 believe such a regime is required and should include all aspects of stations and service delivery.

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

Q14 comments: I believe far more emphasis should be placed on real-time passenger feedback. Given the overall volume of traffic a twice yearly survey of 1,000 passengers is simply insufficient.

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: Schedule planning should aim to remove the need for standing unless ticket prices are specifically reduced for services where standing is a possibility / probability. The passenger buying a ticket is entitled to expect to get a seat for his / her journey.

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: A requirement to change trains acts as a strong disincentive to use rail services for a wide variety of rail users including the aged, the infirm, the disabled, the young and those unfamiliar with the area. Wherever possible direct service opportunities should be maximised.

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 authority should specify minimum levels of service, so many per day, so many per hour and maximum journey times. For example Aberdeen to Edinburgh not less than 15 trains per day M-Sa with no train slower than 2h45m and 3 no slower than 2h25m

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

Q18 comments: The authority should specify minimum service levels of service, service speeds on board services and style of service. By style of service I mean avoiding use of high density 5 abreast airline style seating on longer distance services and ensuring that on scenic routes tourist use is maximised by offering stock with seats properly aligned to panoramic windows.

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

Q19 comments: The franchisee should be able to retain all profits made from services in excess of the minimum service levels.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: The overall purpose of the fares policy must be to maximally reduce the public subsidy of rail services consistent with maximising use of rail services and rail service capacity. It must not be forgotten that subsidy of rail services by reducing road use subsidises road users and provides environmental benefits.

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: A government regulated fare should be available on all services that form part of the minimum contracted service provision. The franchisee should be able to offer unregulated fares on all services provided beyond the minimum service provision and to encourage uptake of underused capacity. Where service speeds significantly improve on the contracted speed an unregulated premium to the regulated fare should be available to the franchisee.

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: Passenger revenue should aim to cover a given percentage of the service cost. Fare prices should move in line with the costs of car use rather than in line with general inflation. Fare levels should reflect journey distance, speed of journey and frequency of service on the route. A rural journey of 50 miles at 30mph on a line with four trains per day should cost significantly less than a similar length journey on an interurban route at 60mph with a train every half hour

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: A significant difficulty is that the most regular peak travellers, those using season tickets, enjoy off-peak fares at peak times and it is the infrequent peak traveller who is penalized, in fact the very person who perhaps travels off peak when they can. I believe very strongly that the difference between peak and off peak ticket prices should be abolished, far more emphasis should be put on filling spare capacity by offering cheaper fares for use of specific services or a limited choice of services (for example travel from Perth to Edinburgh on a specific train with return on any service from Edinburgh after 2000), season tickets should be far more limited in their offer (for example Linlithgow to Edinburgh Mondays to Fridays only arriving in Edinburgh before 0900 and departing from Edinburgh between 1630 and 1930) and there should be more opportunity to make savings on journeys made regularly with multi journey tickets (for example 6 journeys Perth to Aberdeen and return in a given two month period)..

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: I do not understand why the 16 least used stations should cost on average £19125 per annum to lease but the next 8 least used stations cost on average only £10500 per annum to lease and the next 13 lesser used stations cost £20,000 per annum to lease. I suspect Achanalt is one of the least used stations and I do not understand how Network Rail can justify the level of charges imposed. Where a station exists it should continue to be used but I believe a much harder line must be taken with network rail on lease costs. The figures suggest it costs £52 per day to lease Achanalt and this is ridiculous! I believe there will very rarely be a case for closing say two adjacent stations and replacing them with one more centrally placed.

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: Additional stations on a line influence the dynamics of the service on that line but third parties should be able to promote a station and gain a return on investment through a premium on tickets for journeys to or from that station.

26. Should only one organisation be responsible for the management and maintenance of stations? If this was the franchisee how should that responsibility be structured in terms of leasing, investment, and issues relating to residual capital value?

Q26 comments: I do not feel qualified to comment on this question

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

Q27 comments: It should be possible for small stations on rural lines to become community owned and maintained, meeting minimum realistic safety standards, with station "volunteers" getting discounted travel from the station

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

Q28 comments: I do not think there is any merit in designating station types much better to designate a range of facilities providing them as appropriate and maintaining them to standard as an element of the service provision. I could present arguments for Perth my local station being in all of the 6 categories proposed. Mobile phone use should be restricted to areas marked on the ground within stations with users instructed to stand still while using phones. There is nothing worse at modern stations than people wandering

around speaking on phones not looking who or what they are bumping into.

Cross-border services

29. Should cross-border services continue to go north of Edinburgh? In operating alongside ScotRail services, how do cross-border services benefit passengers and taxpayers? And who should specify these services, the Department of Transport or the Scottish Ministers?

Q29 comments: Yes, they absolutely must. I refer earlier to my perception of the very high value of direct services. But there is a conflict between not wanting a 5 car service suitable north of Edinburgh taking a valuable ECML path and not wanting a 10 car service suitable south of Edinburgh running half empty north of Edinburgh. I believe the north of Edinburgh services should be operated by Scotrail throughout the length of their journey from and to London and should be formed of two 5 car units south of Edinburgh and just one such unit north of Edinburgh. I believe, alternatively, there are precedents for a single service to be operated by more than one franchise. East Coast could operate services south of Edinburgh using an East Coast and a Scotrail Unit and north of Edinburgh Scotrail would operate the service with just the Scotrail unit. It would be disgraceful if in the 21st century it was “too difficult” to run through trains from north of Edinburgh to London when it has been done for 150 years or so! I believe there should also be at least one daily service from each of Aberdeen and Inverness and possibly another from Dundee routed from Perth via Cumbernauld to Motherwell and south to Carlisle to Birmingham and Bristol.

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: Absolutely not! There are no benefits whatsoever in making people change 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: I believe a very long franchise period (30 years) would incentivise a franchisee to provide suitable new rolling stock for routes as appropriate. While technically our modern rolling stock is I am assured very good from a passenger's perspective most of it is very poor. We have ended up with suburban style stock operating all services which is nonsense. Cramped airline style uncomfortable seating with very high backs without proper table compartments and not aligned to windows makes most travel actually quite unpleasant. We need to get the basics right before worrying about wifi connectivity and electronic seat reservation indicators on seats etc. The most pleasant rolling stock in Scotland is probably on the Strathspey

Railway. I jest not and it is not sufficient to say but time has moved on and we live in a different age. We want people to travel by train by choice and for most travel comfort is more important than simple speed.

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

Q32 comments:

Commuter services 5 abreast seating, airline style and minimum (but not no) toilets, cycle provision

Inter City services 4 abreast seating mixed airline and bays with tables style seating, specific watchable overhead luggage and cycle provision

Rural services 4 abreast seating, bays with tables style seating aligned to windows, additional luggage and cycle provision.

First class provision and catering provision should always be at the discretion of the franchisee above the minimum service specification.

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 want a comfortable seat in a bay with a table aligned to a window on all other than commuter services before being bothered about wifi and mobile phone provision. Actually mobile phone use (if not use of laptops in appropriate spaces) is now almost as anti-social as smoking used to be. All services should have mobile-phone free quiet areas in which all mobile phone use is strictly banned.

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 provision should be entirely a matter for the franchisee beyond the minimum service specification

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

Q35 comments: Consumption of alcohol should not be banned on any train other than temporarily in connection with sporting events likely to give rise to tension between rival supporters. Most bad behaviour on trains caused by alcohol is because excessive alcohol has been drunk prior to getting on board the train not because excessive alcohol has been drunk on the train. Only on long distance cross-border trains is journey length really long enough for drunkenness to result from alcohol consumed only on the train. I am totally

opposed to restricting the freedom of the travelling individual to responsibly enjoy an alcoholic drink because of the actions of a small minority which should be better policed off the train.

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

Q36 comments: Most people can obtain timetable information on line at home but I was amazed recently that I could not pick up a timetable leaflet for Glasgow to Stranraer trains at Perth. The answer that these trains do not go through Perth was hardly adequate. Let's get basic provisions right first. All staffed stations to have timetable leaflets for all services in Scotland

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: We should continue to specify the present level of sleeper services which should be invested in with modern rolling stock and much more aggressively marketed. Air travel is now so unpleasant generally that I believe there could be a renaissance in sleeper use if it was updated and marketed better

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: The sleeper service should be part of the main Scotrail franchise

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 appeal would be changed more with better stock and I am not sure there is much scope to change timings. The idea to route sleeper services to Waterloo to allow more leisurely boarding and disembarking would

be helpful too. I do not believe there are the same platform pressures in Scotland. Inverness and Aberdeen are sensible destinations but starting the Aberdeen service earlier from Inverness (with reciprocal northbound arrangements) would allow stations between Inverness and Aberdeen to benefit from the sleeper service and reduce sleeper bases from two to a larger one in Inverness. Oban, with the island ferry connections may be a better terminus than Fort William but would need new infrastructure I believe. It would be simpler to provide a Railcar connection to and from Crianlarich from Oban (A single car Class 153 could also provide additional short workings from Oban in summer for tourists.)

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: I do not feel qualified to comment in this area other than to say that I believe that there are greater environmental benefits to be obtained more cost effectively by putting more freight on rail rather than through concentrating on modal shift of passengers to rail for environmental reasons