

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:

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

Q2 comments:

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

Q3 comments:

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

Q4 comments:

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

Q5 comments:

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

Q6 comments: Tie incentives to objective measures (journey time; delay rates; ticket prices; passengers without seats etc) in priority to opinion surveys

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

Q7 comments:

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

Q8 comments:

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments:

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:

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

Q11 comments: Define (and penalise) lateness by reference to all station stops, not just the final destination.

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

Q12 comments:

13. Is a Service Quality Incentive Regime required? And if so should it cover all aspects of stations and service delivery, or just those being managed through the franchise?

Q13 comments:

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

Q14 comments:

Scottish train services

15. Can better use be made of existing train capacity, such as increasing the permitted standing time beyond the limit of 10 minutes or increasing the capacity limit? What is an acceptable limit for standing times on rail services?

Q15 comments: Passengers do not like standing and it makes their travel time more stressful and less efficient. It is hard to see increased standing rates leading to an overall 'win'.

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:

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:

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

Q18 comments:

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

Q19 comments: Tie the payment flows more closely to performance.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: To promote rail growth – as a means to greater choice, social inclusion, reduced environmental impact (not just CO2, but also intrusion into living spaces); while covering costs as far as possible. (Lower fares => higher usage => lower fixed cost per passenger. Also, lower fares => greater social inclusion, wider travel options.)

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:

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:

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:

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Proper monitoring of usage patterns, including on-site observations/interviews. These seem to have been lacking in the Scottish IIP document of September 2011 for example, which at Table 11 lists some stations purportedly with <1 passenger per call and says: 'In these low footfall stations the passenger revenue at these stations is often insufficient to cover even the cost of stopping trains.' But some of these stations are request stop only for ALL services stopping there and so should always have >1 passenger per call! Also, these stations may be generating revenue not attributed to them – due to unrecorded breaks of journey; journeys made on tickets to nearby larger stations at the same fare; en route changes of train with split ticketing. The presumption should be strongly against closures.

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:

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:

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

Q27 comments:

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

Q28 comments:

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 most definitely. The benefits are 1) convenience for passengers of through train availability 2) reduces people flows at Edinburgh – good for those who have difficulty changing trains (heavy luggage; elderly; vulnerable/confused by unfamiliar large station) and reduces crowds (good for local commuters too) 3) proper long-distance trains serving more stations, giving a higher standard of train accommodation to passengers travelling within Scotland, as well as to those making long cross-border journeys (some of whom will no doubt desert rail if they are forced to take a short/mid distance grade Scotrail train and change as part of their journey; see also 9.20 in the consultation document) 4) Avoids trains blocking platforms at Waverley while they are deboarded, cleaned and reboarded.

Even if there is some thinning of usage north of Edinburgh, the services get reasonable use in my experience. In any case, some of the reduced passenger count can surely be explained by the time of day – eg, if the 1600 from Kings Cross to Aberdeen were cut short at Edinburgh (arrival time ~2030), and turned around to go somewhere else (back down south) what sort of loadings could realistically be expected on a departure from Edinburgh at ~2100? Or do you just send the train off to a depot overnight – itself a waste of available passenger-carrying capacity?

The case is not made for the supposed benefits stated at 8.8. Taking each in turn-

Finance – If total revenue to the UK rail industry is reduced, as must be likely if the above benefits of through journeys are taken away, why should a Scottish franchisee expect its income to go up? If it's just at the expense of operators south of Edinburgh, why should it be assumed that those operators (or Westminster) won't reduce the service they're prepared to provide across the border, thereby reducing some of the market within Scotland? Won't the strengthening of a monopoly within Scotland reduce financial benefits?

Resilience – Wouldn't the bad weather instead risk missed connections, thus changing the nature of the problem but not reducing its magnitude?

Control – As a matter of geographical fact Scotland adjoins England and is connected to it by rail. There Scottish part of the UK network cannot operate wholly independently, without sacrificing the network benefits. Even if the rails were cut at Berwick and Carlisle with passengers forced to walk between the north and south ends of each station, Scotrail would still need to coordinate its services with those operating in England.

Simplicity – How is it 'simpler' for passengers to be forced to deal with 2 operators, who maybe have different ticket offers/restrictions? Fare anomalies are likely to become more common. And, as above, why will an increase in Scotrail's monopolistic freedoms 'remove duplications and inefficiencies' or serve the interests of either passengers or taxpayers?

The within-England passenger mileage on these cross-border services is presumably greater than the within-Scotland mileage, and it seems reasonable for DfT to oversee these services. This does not apply for the sleeper services (which should have been mentioned in this Section 8), where Scottish control is probably the right approach.

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: All cross border services going to Inverness/Aberdeen already stop at Waverley en route – so passengers can already choose to connect there. Merely calling the station a Hub gives no passenger benefits.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Avoid 'cheap and nasty' and the vicious circle of low quality > deters rail travel > reduces rail income > less money to invest in stations/track/trains > low quality. In other words: make sure that strategies aim at reducing the NET costs (ie, taking into account the benefits of attracting more users), not the headline costs.

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

Q32 comments: There is a great mix of journey lengths in Scotland. At present the trains on the shorter/higher density commuter services are much better suited to their purpose than the ones pressed into service on the longer distance routes (central belt to Aberdeen; all the highland routes). These longer routes should get inter-city type trains, including proper luggage/cycle storage, comfortable seats, no vibrations/noise from underfloor diesel engines, and also panoramic windows (ideally even at one/both ends of the train).

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: Low priority for mobiles, should be a matter for the mobile phone companies. Medium priority for WIFI, which is nice and of course already exists on the cross border Virgin & East Coast services.

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 availability increases choice for passengers and the prestige of the service as a whole – and gets higher fares from people who can afford to pay them.

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

Q35 comments: Limit any ban as far as possible (to preserve maximum choice for responsible public), perhaps by time/day, type of alcohol (beer vs wine vs spirits) whether bought on-train (so under control of buffet staff)

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

Q36 comments:

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: Sleeper services should be protected because of the benefits they offer (as at Q39) and the increased choice/'option value' they represent, given that they are a fundamentally different product from other transport modes, including daytime rail.

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: Probably should be part of the main franchise. Fragmentation reduces efficiency and is likely to lead to passenger bewilderment.

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: Appeal of service is – 1) Much less 'dead time' than alternatives of flying (travel to airports, check in time etc) or daytime train/driving (takes many hours) 2 Low stress, avoiding peak time crush 3) Can save costs/environmental impacts of a hotel stay 4) Novelty value; links to golden age of rail 5) Connectivity value, especially for the Fort William and Inverness lines and connecting lines (whose journey times to London would

be unbearably long using only daytime services).

These benefits are accentuated for the Highlander sleeper, admittedly for a smaller total travel market. More early/late daytime trains, welcome in themselves as they would be, wouldn't significantly undermine the above benefits and should therefore not be seen as an alternative.

Most important facility is a proper high-quality bed in a quiet, smooth-riding cabin. The existing carriages were well made but are showing their age – their replacements must raise the quality bar. For showers, the focus should be on upgrading/expanding the offerings at stations – if the trains have them (which maybe they shouldn't because of the space taken and the large volumes of water to be transported), it should only be in a minority of cabins. More important is the lounge car, which should be developed/enhanced.

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: The greenest thing the railway can do is keep cars off the road.