

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: There is economic, environmental and social advantages in encouraging both freight and passenger services (why not combined?) throughout Scotland: in particular in the remote, sparsely populated areas where roads are often narrow and less suited to large wagons and buses. This leads to my support for a dual franchise system

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

Q2 comments: Longer rather than shorter to encourage a long-term view to both investments and profits by operators but with defined targets and review thresholds, with an option on both sides to cancel, to ensure good performance.

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

Q3 comments: Bond to be posted

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

Q4 comments: Should not be needed if the contract is well written

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

Q5 comments: Tenders to be invited

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

Q6 comments: Market competition

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

Q7 comments: Plus or minus a percentage (say 25%) of the costs.

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

Q8 comments: Bonus payments and penalties based on time-keeping, traveller satisfaction, reduction in carbon footprint and so on

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: do both

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: aligned with the services

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

Q11 comments: good connectivity

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

Q12 comments: long journey times, relative to other transport options, are a very negative aspect of current rail travel – but then is late arrival and missing the next connection

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: Cover all aspects

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

Q14 comments: Traveller satisfaction sampling

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: Yes, increase permitted standing time. Perhaps standing for the whole of a 60 minute journey at peak time is acceptable?

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: The need for frequent changes is a deterrent to travellers – it increases the time and inconvenience of the journey relative to travel by car. The provision of a comfortable, safe and convenient waiting room with, say, the option of tea or coffee, might be a way to mitigate the disadvantage – but the wait needs to be short.

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: Some government direction is required for social needs

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

Q18 comments: targeted as in the consultation paper

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

Q19 comments: Provide a per capita bonus for passenger numbers above a threshold especially on off-peak services

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: to provide an attractive alternative to travel by car – this means matching real costs of car travel (not just fuel) for a family. In addition, in rural areas, there is a social element to be considered.

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: Commuter and long-haul should be subject to economic forces; rural lines subject to regulation. However in both cases perhaps

supply an environmental rebate?

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: No comment

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: Significant – perhaps 30% to 50%

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: In remote locations, social and tourist benefits must be considered alongside purely economic costs.

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: In rural areas, is it an option for the local community to become involved in running the 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: No

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

Q27 comments: Perhaps by offering local, frequent travellers a discount scheme.

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

Q28 comments: as per consultation paper.

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 – we need an integrated transport system in the UK. Can the financial aspects be balanced by some Scot-Rail services running into England?

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: There are distinct disadvantages to making all connections with England go via Edinburgh, especially for those travelling, say, from the west of Scotland to west England or Wales. Keep Glasgow as a hub as well.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Consider the rolling stock used elsewhere in Europe – especially Switzerland which has many small operators and a reputation for cleanliness and timely operation.

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

Q32 comments: Cleanliness, adequate seating for all, good temperature and ventilation control, luggage storage – on short journeys, and perhaps even on longer journeys, plush seating is not required. Basic toilet and washing facilities and, on longer journeys, provision of hot drinks and snacks.

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: The provision of Wi-Fi would be a big plus and would, in my opinion, lead to increase passenger numbers. Anything more than a nominal fee to access would be a turn-off and lead to numerous attempts to circumnavigate.

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: Perhaps the provision of quiet carriages is more important than providing first-class accommodation. If standard class is to be improved would first-class be needed?

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

Q35 comments: Smoking is no longer permitted: perhaps now is the time to introduce no-drinking carriages with the aim of eventually no-drinking trains.

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

Q36 comments: Ensure broadband is available throughout the Highlands. Re-visit web-site design

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: This is a vital link for the Highlands and is a viable and green alternative to air or road travel. The Caledonian Sleeper should be specifically required to be run and the current service improved

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: A separate franchise for this service could well be the best way forward.

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 is the ability to sleep away the otherwise unproductive journey time and to arrive in the heart of London, Edinburgh or

the Highlands without the hassle of airport transfers with the need to be frisked at security or a long drive. More early and late trains would not negate these advantages. With its connections to Mallaig, Oban, The Great Glen and the near-by presence of Ben Nevis, Fort William is a superior hub to Oban except for the ferries to the Western Isles.

The ability to put a car on the train, as in previous years, might be worthy of consideration: perhaps with a significantly reduced fare for small city cars. An additional southerly access point, outwith London, would be beneficial.

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: Greater use of existing rural lines for freight traffic is possible and would reduce the overall use of road haulage.