

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: Commuter services within the central belt could be covered by an economic rail element, but population levels in most areas would require a social rail element to encourage rural development and tourism and support fragile rural economies.

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

Q2 comments: Too long contracts could lead to complacency and lack of effort from franchisees.

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

Q3 comments: Risk support should be used if necessary to retain rural rail services and support investment that may lead to increased rail usage.

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

Q4 comments: If profits increase as a result of substantial investment and innovation by the franchisee, they should be entitled to retain some profits.

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:

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: Penalty clauses in the contracts.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: 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: One system for the whole of Scotland, it is a relatively small country.

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

Q11 comments: Performance indicators should also take journey quality into consideration.

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: Not sure about an incentive regime, it would be nice to think that any franchisees appointed would provide a high quality service.

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

Q14 comments: Customer feedback, mystery shoppers.

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: The permitted standing time should not be increased (and I am not sure it is applied at present). Given the high cost of train fares, all passengers should be entitled to a seat.

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 disruption of having to change more often on a long journey would probably deter potential travellers, especially tourists, the elderly or those travelling with children. The chance of passengers missing connections because of delays would increase.

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 government should stipulate minimum levels of service provision, otherwise it would be too easy for the franchisee to say there is insufficient customer demand in many areas because of the low population levels.

18. What level of contract specification should we use 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:

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: The fares policy should encourage travellers to make more use of the train services. The situation where a return fare is dearer if one makes the return journey on a different day to the outward journey should be removed.

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: Rural fares should be regulated by the Government, and schemes such as the Highland railcard encouraged. I certainly use the trains more because of it, and my employers also encourage travel by rail because of it.

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: If fares must increase, a slow steady increase is preferable to a sudden large jump in prices.

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: When living near Edinburgh and sometimes having to use the overcrowded commuter trains, I sometimes felt people should have to pay less for travelling on the commuter services. For many other parts of Scotland, the services are too infrequent to give passengers much choice in when they travel, especially if they want to return home the same day.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Passenger use and community needs, including new developments.

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: How to ensure safety standards are met. Local authorities are cutting services, not taking on new ones. How to ensure a station is looked after in the long term (initial enthusiasm from a few local people will soon wear off).

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: Yes, to ensure consistency.

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

Q27 comments: By making the rail service attractive to residents in terms of price and service times. Recognising the efforts of local groups who enhance the appearance of the station, e.g. through gardens.

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

Q28 comments: All stations should be lit, have a sheltered waiting area, and means of contacting railway staff to obtain information (mobile phone reception is not always available) and trains easily accessible to all users. Stations where passengers change between trains should have better waiting and toilet facilities than the smaller halts. If there is a station yard or car park between the public road and the platforms, it would be helpful if these were lit as well. Coming from a brightly lit train to a dark car park is disorientating.

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: No, Scottish franchisees should be entitled to that passenger revenue, unless there is a reciprocal arrangement for Scottish trains to operate south of the border. However, if passengers were to be expected to transfer to Scottish trains, the level of comfort in the trains would have to be significantly improved to retain passengers.

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: does Edinburgh Waverley have the capacity to cope with more services starting and terminating there instead of passing through more quickly? Glasgow would possibly need to be offered as an alternative cross-border destination, especially if freight use is to be encouraged.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments:

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

Q32 comments: Trains on all routes should have clean, working toilets,

refreshment facilities on longer journeys, capacity to take at least 4 bicycles (the restriction to two bicycles is little use if a family wishes to use the train). The seating arrangement where there is a table between two pairs of seats facing one another is of limited value, especially on busy services, as there is nowhere to keep small luggage within reach, e.g. you might wish to take papers from a briefcase and work on them, but then where do you put the briefcase without putting it on other passenger's feet.

The diesel units are very uncomfortable for longer journeys, and the suitcase racks in the middle of the carriages often have a most irritating rattle. Travelling recently on Italian trains in the Dolomites, one couldn't fail to notice the high standard of their trains compared to ours.

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: Probably not a priority given the poor reception in much of Scotland, and the speed with which these technologies are changing. It might be difficult to keep up to date.

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: Review the design of the rolling stock. For much of Scotland however, I doubt if there would be sufficient passenger numbers to make first class viable, except on the longest, cross-border routes.

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

Q35 comments: Safety and comfort of other passengers and of staff.

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

Q36 comments: Make the help points more prominent, so that passengers, especially non-locals, can find a means of obtaining information.

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: A sleeper service should continue to be provided.

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: Part of the main 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: For me the appeal of the sleeper is in being able to catch the evening train from our village, board the sleeper at Inverness and arrive in London with a whole day to travel further or do whatever I have to do. One can leave luggage secure, and have space to move about.

Perhaps Oban could be considered as an additional destination, with sleepers going to say Fort William and Oban on different days.

I would not pay more for sleeper facilities as fares are already at the upper edge of our travel budget, and unfortunately it is now sometimes cheaper to fly from Inverness, although I prefer to travel by train.

More effective temperature controls in the cabins would be nice, and better soundproofing between cabins.

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: