

## 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 social rail element should encompass services to remote Highland Areas and freight in these areas too so that they can benefit from long distance rail services where road costs in fuel are particularly high.

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

Q2 comments: 10 years minimum but possibly longer to ensure that high cost developments in rolling stock etc can be justified in capital terms

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: The ability to share profit is a driver to any commercial enterprise and thus should be a feature of future franchises but in view of the social needs of rail services in Scotland the penalties for not returning a profit would need careful consideration

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

Q5 comments: The introduction of third parties only adds to the complexity of timetabling, matching arrival and departure times etc. The present arrangement of all the internal rail services in Scotland being provided by one operator has much to commend it.

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

Q6 comments: I have always felt that the franchise arrangements were based on penalising companies for non target meeting. Thus to ensure a safety margin timetables have often been relaxed. Perhaps reward for adventurous services and timetabling and the achievement of improvements in speed and

reliability should be used instead.

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: See my answer to Q6 above. The problem with 'penalisation' is to reduce the incentive to be innovative in timetabling and shortening journey times unless the franchise holder is paid to do so under current arrangements. The penalties only serve to remove money from the system, thus making it even harder for the franchise holder to meet targets. Perhaps a credit and debit system should be used on the basis of points instead of penalties. Thus improvement credits could be used to pay-off debits for not reaching targets. This could be over an extended period rather than annualised. Perhaps at stages in the franchise period the credit and debit points could be converted to cash settlements.

### **Achieving reliability, performance and service quality**

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

Q9 comments: See answers to Q6 and 8

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: By service group so that particular events do not skew the local results

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

Q11 comments: Seat comfort, on train service provision, and toilet quality (on and off trains) and station safety and cleanliness are the key features for most passengers

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

Q12 comments: Journey times should come before performance. Anyone can achieve performance targets if we return to Victorian or steam hauled timings

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: All aspects should be covered but 'incentives' is the operative word because at present much is based on penalties.

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

Q14 comments: Much more could be done on passenger survey work. I cannot remember when I was last asked what I thought about my rail journey

### **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: What a joke! I used to travel frequently from Edinburgh to Inverness and in summer months and at other times of the year standing from Edinburgh to Stirling and often on beyond Perth on a Friday afternoon was the norm. There is much need of additional, flexible means of train enhancement and additional capacity

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: Additional interchanges would slow down already too long journeys many of which in Scotland have laughably low end to end average speeds

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: If they have to be used, it has to be by the franchise holder. Central government is notoriously bad at directing at the micro level and realising all the implication of knee jerk reactions

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

Q18 comments: The Target specification option proposed and the incentive

that would produce modal shift is a most worrying concept for those in rural areas that have for example seen much improved services say in and around Inverness and where there has been very significant growth in rail use. While some of that growth can be attributed to tourism, that use should and must not be excluded from calculation but must be included in the 'public service obligation.

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

Q19 comments: As outlined about a system of positive reward for successful innovation should be included. At present getting new services in place is near impossible due to the number of assessments and economic hurdles, risk payments etc etc.

### **Scottish rail fares**

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

Q20 comments: The fare structure should be set to encourage use and capacity adjusted accordingly. Too often increasing fares has been used to regulate capacity. The franchise holder should be free to set fares but with only a few regulated fares as at present. However, compared to journeys in other European countries, the fares in the UK and Scotland are very high indeed. And before long people will opt for other cheaper means or their own cars. While cars are expensive to operate. While several people are travelling together, a car is the cheaper way to go if only fuel costs are considered. After all most people have a car and are prepared to bear the overhead cost regardless of annual use.

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: Suburban fares should be regulated as these are essential journeys for most travellers. There is more choice as far as intercity fares are concerned

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 question should perhaps be how can we reduce rail costs to minimise the need to constantly increase fares above inflation rates. Any reducing in subsidy will have an entirely detrimental affect on service provision and quality. Great care is needed not to 'kill off' the growth in rail

use when set against the governments environmental aims. Perhaps some of the subsidy given to wind-farm operators when their turbines are switched off because the wind speeds are too high could go instead to the railways which make a high contribution to environmental quality by taking people out of their cars.

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: The difference should as high as possible but at the same time employers should be encouraged to introduce flexible working to reduce peak train use.

### **Scottish stations**

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

Q24 comments: The network of stations seems to be about right at present but there does need to be a re-alignment of some stations to reflect new and increasing population areas. Very low use can be the only determinant but in some rural areas where there are few or no other alternatives social need should override the numbers element. It is however, idiotic that stations are leased to the franchisee. This means that two companies have to get a profit out of station use. The stations should be held in trust by the franchisee. The stations then return to the government at the end of the franchise for allocation to the next franchisee

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: This is a key way in which new stations can be introduced. Having been involved in such a case in the Highlands, it was a most difficult and time consuming exercise with far too many agencies involved and far too much money wasted on overcoming internal railway interactions.

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: Only one organisation, the franchisee, should be responsible but they should have powers to delegate that responsibility to say a local authority or local voluntary group.

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

Q27 comments: By allocation small sums of money to take on the responsibility but with restrictions on aspects of safety.

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

Q28 comments: Categorisation is always dangerous because there are exceptions to every rule and experience tells me that those responsible will find every excuse under the sun to prevent an exception (usually on the basis that it will create a precedent. It should be up to the experience of the operator what facilities are provided so long as basic needs of passenger numbers are met and they will tend to judge this on the usage made of the station and its proximity to other local services.

### **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: Of course cross border services should go north of Edinburgh. It is basically the only way truly comfortable trains can be used in these areas. The long runs to Inverness and Aberdeen on Turbo 170s do not compare to the HST 125 despite their age and often run down inside. The time delay and nuisance of a train change at Edinburgh is nonsensical.

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: These connections can already be made, as all that is necessary is for a passenger wishing to go elsewhere other than the train's ultimate destination is for them to leave the train at the appointed place, be that Edinburgh, Stirling or Perth.

### **Rolling stock**

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

Q31 comments: The complexity of rolling stock costing is one of the complex wonders of the world and it seems crazy that there are both rail access charges and stock leasing costs. If Calmac can own its ferries, surely the train operator should own the rolling stock and at the end of the franchise this stock is either sold to the franchisee or on the open market or to the government. I see no reason why in a self-contained operation like Scotrail, the track is not part of the franchise too. That seemed to work in the days of

the big four pre 1948 and BR without any great difficulty. There may be the opportunity to do this if there is to be a Scottish government or increased devolution and if all responsibility for rail service in Scotland goes to Edinburgh.

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

Q32 comments: Clearly greater services and comfort should be provided on the intercity and longer haul rural routes. Seats need to be better matched to window openings esp on the scenic routes. It was a great delight to have the restaurant car on the Highland Chieftain from Edinburgh to Invernes when a leisurely meal could be taken to pass the time going north and an excellent breakfast coming south.

The loading gauge to which the 170s are built seems quite different to that used for the Mark 3 coaches and even the new 380s. Whatever trains are introduced on the longer distance routes should have as much internal space as possible to give maximum comfort and also have maximum luggage capacity. There is nothing worse than being on a 158 or 170 in the summer months when tourists try to pack on huge rucksacks, cases and everything else including the kitchen sink. Perhaps some stock could include a motorised luggage van converted from some older stock for use on such trains.

### **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: In my humble opinion, I would be entirely happy if no such provision was made because there is absolutely nothing worse than listening into conversations should into mobile devices like "I'm on the train but I don't know when it gets to X" and then ensues a long inconsequential chatter about the days events, how dreadful train travel is, what will be done tonight (although the speaker has no clue if and when they will get to their destination...

I realise I am out of step on this but the provision of a quiet coach is and essential for those of us who would rather read or just look at the countryside going by.

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: If the standard class accommodation is good enough why should there be a need for first class. However, on longer runs a small amount should be provided for those who feel they cannot travel with the hoy-

palloy.

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

Q35 comments: This must be done because it is now common place through the day to find people in groups or alone who cannot move an inch without drinking and making a noise. I have seen several cases where the staff on trains abused where they politely asked passengers to stop drinking. One even stopping the train and refusing to let it go on until order was restored. I have enjoyed a can of beer from the trolley or a small bottle of wine in the dining car after a long, busy day but would happily forgo that in the interests of peace on the trains.

The Gold coach service to on the intercity routes does not permit the drinking of alcohol and what a pleasure that is especially as all passengers are served a courtesy sandwich, tea and cake or tablet en route. The same could be done on trains.

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

Q36 comments: More accurate information should be given when there are disruptions to services both at stations and on trains and the reasons for the delays

### **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: The sleeper service should be specified

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: It should be a requirement of the 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: I cannot speak for the choice between Fort William or Oban but the overnight service from Inverness/Aberdeen to London is a most useful one that I used several times. It gets right to the heart of the city without the hassle of security at airports or getting into the city. An early business start can be made and a late finish without the need or cost of a hotel in London. There are also many older people or those afraid to fly who choose to travel in the comfort of the sleeper. Early and late trains would still have travel a could part of their journey at night with few people on board but no means of sleeping in any comfort

### **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: