

Consultation Questions

There is an electronic form with all of the questions, on the website at:
www.transportscotland.gov.uk/rail2014

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: Merit in developing a dual focus - West & North Highland lines an example

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

Q2 comments: 15 years, to encourage commercial initiatives!

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

Q3 comments: Right of franchisee to withdraw if significant fall in level of Scottish GDP.

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

Q4 comments: Profit share halved between Scottish Government and the franchisee(s)

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

Q5 comments: YES, but standard track access charges, and arbitrary determined use of common stations with 'Primary Franchisee'!!!

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

Q6 comments: Merit of John Lewis type partnership to incentivise staff

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: Failure to provide timekeeping, safety, asset management, forward business plans, and renewals could lead to Termination

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: Localisation matter, but existing Service Groups practical

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

Q11 comments: Require the 'Primary Franchisees' to liaise with Local Authorities, Highland Islands Enterprise and Passenger User Groups

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

Q12 comments: Enhanced performance objective, ~~but~~ journey time important but first

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: Yes

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

Q14 comments: Above all customer service attention (good at present)

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, up to 20 minutes (in place of 10)

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: Passengers value through trains
Rail / Road interchange needs strengthening, but will cost

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: Whilst Government direction is tempting, the fixed aspects of railway operation suggest franchise dominance.

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

Q18 comments: There should be one primary contract to the main operator but mini contract for Forth & Clyde - Paddocks where the income of the existing competitor is smaller, suggest an experiment!

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

Q19 comments: Shared profit beyond Franchise agreement, Possible requirement that Local Manager demonstrate effective involvement with Local Communities, rather than accountants.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: To generate income by attracting customers, and thus reduce in part the use of roads.

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: The range of Fares needs to be restricted - Passengers do not know what is going on.

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: Increased attraction of customers should reduce Taxpayer Subsidy. Fares rise only in line with CPI, Yes when road enhancement has occurred, 'Test the water'

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 be increased - Flexible Working is increasing. Encouragement of Off Peak can result in more balanced use of Rolling Stock

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: *in general where two stations are less than 1 kilometre apart one should be closed. MORE POSITIVE PLANNING OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE BEHIND RAILWAYS.*

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: *ENCOURAGE THIS, subject to operational constraints*

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 franchisee, Other than Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Central which should remain with Network Rail*

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

Q27 comments: *Local rail managers must be people centred, meet with Community Councils, and Passenger User Groups. be pro-active in an industry where 'freed' information detracts this.*

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

Q28 comments: *Existing franchisees doing well. Other than over Ticket provisions needed at main stations.*

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 - SEE APPENDUM*

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: *No - a gross inconvenience to traveller especially Tourists - an economic disadvantage to the North.*

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: *Franchisee should be motivated to purchase stock, thus ruling out profits for a middleman (bank!)*

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

Q32 comments: *Seats, tip up seats, toilet, sliding doors. For longer distance routes, second toilet, 1st Class accommodation, Refreshments, LUGGAGE SPACE. Tube train type double sliding door impossible in strategy! in route!*

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: *Keep one carriage 'Quiet' in each train.*

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: *While First Class facility is commercially viable against space used then Franchisee should have to option*

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

Q35 comments: *Alcohol should be banned on all intercity services just as Smoking already is.*

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

Q36 comments: *Route guides should be available on all Highland train.*

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: *Specify for Highland Sleeper, to all three destinations*

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: Yes, BUT SEE ADDENDUM

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 to Sleep & use Lounge Car. Time of arrival is right for appointment at destinations of each train
BUT SEE ALSO ADDENDUM.

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: Optimise the use of electric traction under the 'wrie'. (although, I think, outside your powers, the use of Voyager Diesel train throughout the electrified lines for Birmingham to Scotland is environmentally wrong!)

ADDENDUM - Re paragraph 8 - Cross Border services

In contrast to much of this admirable document I regret that these pages appear restrictionist. Earlier, the Executive Summary at 18 on page 2 states: -

" Passengers will be at the heart of our considerations, and we need to continue to strive to provide a high quality passenger experience "

The challenge is to carry this aspiration into practice.

The boxed inset on ORATS on page 51 is helpful. An earlier scheme "The Railway Clearing House" apportioned railway revenues between some 110 companies one hundred years ago. It should be possible to develop the present system fairly for both governments.

I am opposed to any suggestion of excluding from/to the south trains from running through to/from North Scotland destinations for the following reasons:-

1. Long distance travellers often find the journey tiring - a change of train is a further inconvenience
2. Edinburgh Waverley is far too complicated a station for the stranger with luggage
3. There is a significant uptake of rail travel by both families with children and the elderly - for both groups a change of train can be difficult.
4. Cutting short long distance trains at Edinburgh will result in loss of traffic to the railway due to:-
 - a) choice of an alternate mode of travel
 - b) a decision not to travel north because of fear of inconvenience in changing trains among old people.
5. Loss of holidaymaker/tourist revenue to the Highland economy
6. The resulting loss of any stimulus through competition to the internal Scottish rail franchisees.

I ask you to consider a more positive approach:-

1. consideration be given to a separate franchise for London - North Scotland trains
2. Such franchise be jointly accountable to London and Edinburgh

3. The terms to include a requirement to provide two daily through services in each direction between Kings Cross and each of Aberdeen and Inverness.
4. Such services come to be formed of two 5 coach IEP bi-modal sets joining/dividing at Edinburgh - environmentally, this provides for the use of electric traction when under the wire, and also goes some way to meeting your concern about undrained seating capacity north of Edinburgh.
5. That in respect of the morning departure from Kings Cross passengers holding tickets to stations up to and including Newcastle be denied access at the ticket gates - this could overcome the resistance of successive east coast operators in providing restriction of access which results in the existing Highland Chieftain being at least fully loaded, the catering trolley movement inhibited at times and during the summer season luggage being stacked in the vestibules on the eastern side of the train in England.
6. Whilst 'open access' can run amok for the franchisee (as I suspect between London and Hull) on element of competition acts as a stimulus for improvement. An Anglo-North Scotland operator should have right of access for Birmingham/Manchester to/from Aberdeen/Inverness if it judges a service to be a viable business.

Of the bullet points at 8.8 on page 51, I would suggest:-

Finance be handled through ORAG

Resilience is better assured with a restricted element of competition

Control is an over insular concept when developing services to the public

Simplicity is already compromised by the necessary recognition of the freight operators in Network Rail timetabling - the same approach is appropriate where there are multiple operators.

An alternative and more conventional approach to the provision of through trains to/from North Scotland is recourse to the East Coast operator, but with the conditions laid out above

Throughout the year, north of Edinburgh both the southbound and northbound existing Highland Chieftain is loaded beyond the capacity of a 170 three car alternative, at least south of Perth. On my last journey northwards I counted 200 passengers in the Standard Class, on leaving

Stirling.

In summary the railway brought improved connectivity to the world.
The Highland economy continues to need that direct connectivity
represented by an expanded railway link outwards.
Any suggestion to deny the facility of through train services
to / from the south is disingenuous and retrograde.

ADDENDUM - Re paragraph 11 - Caledonian Sleeper

- Q 37 - government should specify outline of Sleeper requirements
- Q 38 - this franchise should be separate from intercity Scottish train services
- Q 39 - the priority, necessarily at exchequer expense, is the Highland Sleeper. This offers a full nights sleep on routes which by day would cover 7-10 hours. Furthermore the places served other than Aberdeen (and to some degree, Inverness) do not have early morning and late evening air services) - many, and in particular Fort William are well away from the airline network. Thus business traffic to / from North Scotland looks to the Sleeper service. Additionally the two Highland branches of the service carry, and could further attract, tourists.

To some degree the Highland Sleeper competes with evening rail services out of London at 7.0pm and 7.30pm to Edinburgh and Glasgow respectively, whilst early morning trains from each cover the 4 hour journey to London in time for most business appointments. It also competes with a wider provision of air services. Whilst this train is a necessary provision for those with late evening engagements, many such travellers are in a position to pay a premium fare.

Sleeping car services should continue to leave London as late as possible in the evening to reach the six Scottish cities in time for early appointments. Southbound services should be timed to reach London broadly as at present for the same reason.

The appeal of Sleeper service could be enhanced by returning to a marketing philosophy of "a hotel on wheels" importantly, the manager of 'on train' staff should be an 'hotelier'

rather than a career railwayman (the movement of the train in traffic is rightly controlled by the guard and driver). The aim should be to emulate the customer service standards of a good hotel which in turn attracts custom thus improving uptake of berths on nights of otherwise lower occupancy. The Lounge Car is an essential feature of each train. Meal service should be included in a contract. Whilst en-suite showers in some First Class accommodation at a premium price would attract some overseas visitors and on Fridays and Sundays perhaps government related traffic flows, there could be an imbalance mid-week, whilst superficially attractive this suggestion would need careful appraisal.

The present 8 coach formation result in a 16 coach length of train at the London end. When in due course longer vehicles come into use, Platform 1 at Euston is unlikely to have sufficient length (Platform 15 would probably do so). One option is to reduce each set by one Standard Class Sleeping car. The commercial balance between standard class occupancy, including the heavily discounted berths at £19 upwards, as against the operational cost of the eighth coach should be examined. Whilst the rebuilding of Euston may include platform lengthening any significant scheme is likely to inconvenience passengers during the works.

Ideally St Pancras/Kings Cross would be a better London location in that it provides connections both to Europe and a wider selection of underground lines. At St Pancras only the 6 international platforms could offer sufficient length. However the number of early morning continental departures and the necessary segregation of international passengers

would seem to rule it out. Kings Cross, given a short extension to Platform 1 would still only take 14 coaches of the present length on the one platform. There may be scope later, after the local services have been diverted under St Pancras en route to South of the Thames. Perhaps then extended platforms could be built up to the north of the easternmost, and at present unused, tunnel to the north of the station.

The contract between the franchisee and Keltic Seafare for space to convey the latter products from Inverness to London suggests that a franchisee faced by entrepreneurship may find it attractive to hire out space for other regular traffic flows which in turn could lead to review of revenue potential as against that for say three seat spaces currently within the seated coach. Whilst a matter for a franchisee it could be suggested that motivation to fill on train space would be likely to lead to increased revenue and some degree of public subsidy reduction.