

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: All services should be covered by the social rail element.

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

Q2 comments: The franchise should be a maximum of 5 years with the ability of the government to take the franchise back if the operator is failing.

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

Q3 comments: Those wanting the franchise should bid at what they think they can run it for. Any future loss on top of this is the responsibility of the franchisee, not the public or the government.

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

Q4 comments: There should be a mechanism that if profits exceed those forecast, an equal profit share with the Scottish Government should be triggered.

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

Q5 comments: None.

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

Q6 comments: No comment to this question.

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

Q7 comments: This question falls outside my knowledge and that of most ordinary commuters, However, if large companies want to bid for a rail franchise with the potential of huge profits, they should have to pay any bonds

or guarantees themselves and not expect the taxpayer to pick up the tab.

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

Q8 comments: If not prepared to fill the franchise commitments, the franchise should be withdrawn and put back into state hands until someone who can fulfil the commitments is found.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Only penalise poor performance, too many times in the past, those running real franchises have treated them as a shareholder cash-cow.

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.

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

Q11 comments: Not by increasing train times as in the document but by actually fining the franchisee for not performing within agreed percentages on punctuality and reliability.

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

Q12 comments: Journey times and performance should go together, if trains are timetabled, providing there are no external factors, then there is no reason why they should not operate on time.

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, All aspects.

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

Q14 comments: Regular passenger surveys.

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: We have the most expensive and worst performing rail service in Europe, the least every passenger deserves is the ability to sit.

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: If you are going to introduce more changes and less direct trains, you will drive more people off the railways.

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: Government, if you leave it to the franchisee, who is in the business of making money, they could twist customer demand for the purpose of profit.

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: To encourage more people to travel by rail by providing an affordable service.

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: All fares should be regulated. Railways should be a public service, not a means of making shareholders rich.

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: Fares should never rise above inflation. To charge passengers more to travel on an enhanced line would be a disgrace, do you charge drivers more if pot-holes have been filled-in?

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: To charge more for peak fares, especially for those that have no alternative but to use the service at this time because of work, is unfair and would drive more people back to their cars.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Figures have been manipulated in recent years by those running franchises all over the UK, the wishes of the local community should be listened to.

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: Stations should be the responsibility of the government, however, if a third party is going to make a positive effect on a station, it should be allowed.

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: Stations should be managed by one organisation, as the system is now, that should be Network Rail, but they should be ultimately run by central government.

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

Q27 comments: First and foremost, by using it to travel, this will only happen when the rail service is reliable and affordable to most of the population.

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

Q28 comments: This is obviously a question for the rail professional and not the lay-man.

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, cross-border services should continue north of Edinburgh. It may surprise those living in Edinburgh and Glasgow that civilisation does exist to the north. To make everyone change in Edinburgh when coming from down south will just mean people will go by alternative means, i.e. bus or plane. If this is a proposal by Scottish Ministers then it should definitely be Department of Transport who specify this service.

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, there are no benefits to those travelling north of Edinburgh if this happened.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Rolling stock should be centrally owned by government,

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

Q32 comments: The main facility every passenger wants is the guarantee of a seat, once that is achieved, more people would travel by 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: As someone who travels on the rail network a lot, both for business and pleasure, the lack of wi-fi has never bothered me and I am very rarely without a mobile signal.

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 is very rarely needed outside of the main business inter-city routes so should be restricted to such.

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

Q35 comments: I am often astounded by the Scottish Government's vendetta against anyone who enjoys a quiet drink. The rules surrounding anti-social behaviour are the same on trains as in the rest of society and thus the British Transport Police should act as such. I sometimes like a quiet beer when travelling, if you are to ban alcohol on trains, you would need to ban it for sale in and around stations with the resulting job losses that would entail.

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

Q36 comments: Train information in Scotland is one area that is good. With live updates on the website, information at stations and on trains and clear timetables.

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 is obviously a service that is an advantage for the business community with connections down south and 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: Whatever gives Scottish commuters the best deal under the current, flawed, franchise system.

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 sleeper has to remain competitive with the airlines, as such, if you were to charge more for better facilities, you would lose out to alternatives, which would also happen if it terminated in Edinburgh instead of going on to Aberdeen and Inverness and all the other stations served by those routes.

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: Carbon and waste.