

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: Social and environmental considerations should be given the greatest priority, sound social and environmental transport policies will lead to economic benefits.

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

Q2 comments: A franchise length should be sufficient to encourage a franchise holder to invest in rolling stock appropriate to the services being provided rather than making do with what is on offer. For example many of the travellers using the railway north of Perth to Inverness, Kyle of Lochalsh, Wick and Thurso do so because they are attracted to the area by its scenic beauty and the opportunities for outdoor activities yet the rolling stock currently in use has seating from which the view is obstructed and there is insufficient luggage space for those travelling with back packs and young children (pushchairs etc.) Security of luggage that has to be placed in the inadequate racks is also a concern. Modern rolling stock would appear to have a working life of only 20 years which includes a major refurbishment after 10 years so a 10 or 20 year length of contract would seem appropriate provided proper safeguards are in place to ensure that the very highest level of standards is maintained at all times.

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

Q3 comments: The operator should be required to operate the services required and be permitted to make a 'normal profit' but should also be penalised for failing to provide the agreed services. Where social and environmental factors outweigh the economic factors then there should be a greater level of support for the services than where economic factors outweigh social and environmental considerations.

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

Q4 comments: Excessive profits should be shared on a 50/50 basis unless it can be shown that they are made by not providing the fringe services e.g. where road transport is used to replace contracted services which the operator regards as inconvenient.

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

Q5 comments: On a proper contracted basis.

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

Q6 comments: By ensuring that the needs of the customer are met providing those needs are within reasonable bounds. Customer satisfaction surveys should be undertaken by independent bodies and given a high weighting in performance assessments.

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

Q7 comments: Sound financial policies must be operated by the franchise holder and the financial operations of the company must be open to scrutiny.

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

Q8 comments: There should be severe financial penalties with particular attention being given to distribution of profits and bonuses.

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: Actual routes and nature of the traffic.

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

Q11 comments: Independent surveys of passenger opinions of services and secret traveller (like secret shopper)

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

Q12 comments: Actual times should be arrived not within blocks of 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: Absolutely all aspects but where a partner service provider is involved consideration must be given to which is giving the good or poor service.

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

Q14 comments: Stations that are staffed should be staffed should be staffed for all services calling at that station unless there are clear grounds for restricted staffing. e.g, Aviemore is not staffed on a Saturday afternoon but is at all other times (or is supposed to be). This causes problems for local residents as well as visitors to the area. A local 'watch committee' may well be appropriate but should not be allowed to become a 'busybody cttee'.

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: Too many trains have insufficient rolling stock to meet customer demand whilst it must be acknowledged that at other times a 2 car unit is over provision. There is also the issue of a lack of back up rolling stock in the event of failure and late running. In these days it should only be necessary to stand in the most exceptional circumstances.

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: Try the Swiss model where the majority of services link in to each other, both rail/rail and rail/road. Where new stations/refurbishments are being designed they should make proper provision for interchange – cost is a factor but in the long term the economic benefits will be worth it.

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: Customer demand first but Government should be prepared to insist on and pay for less remunerative services being provided on social

and environmental grounds.

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

Q18 comments: Very detailed but with an independent arbitrator to oversee disputes.

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

Q19 comments: By agreeing proper levels of financial support based upon the success of the innovation. E.g. a train was provided, originally from Kingussie, from Aviemore to Inverness at around 8am but failed to attract passengers in any great numbers due to there being no appropriate return train at around 5.30pm from Inverness (ironically now the early train has been withdrawn there is an appropriately timed train from Inverness) nor was there a financial incentive to would be passengers in the form of an attractive fare package for using the 2 trains. People therefore chose to continue using the car or bus on convenience and cost grounds.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Fares should reflect the true costs with the actual amount charged to the customer taking in to account the social and environmental costs which should be covered by government funding.

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: Fares should reflect the true costs but the Government should be able to impose upper and lower limits and rules on when fares apply e.g. cheap day returns. Government should be prepared to make up the difference between true costs and actual fares permitted on social and environmental grounds.

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 policy should be used to encourage people to use public transport rather than private cars, especially in urban areas, but the

intelligent use of sector pricing is appropriate providing it takes into account the actual times trains run.

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: Off peak fares should be greatly reduced to encourage people to use the train services outwith peak times. Many employers work flexi-time and by evening out the traffic flows more effective use of the resources will be made.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Operational railway requirements are a major factor but local communities should have a big say. It should be possible for local authorities to sponsor the provision of local stations. Integrated public transport would go a long way to mitigating hardship where a station is closed. Closures should only take place where it can be shown that usage has fallen to such an extent that no hardship to the community as a whole will occur, this will be very rare.

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: essential although local government is often out of touch with local communities. If councils were no longer permitted to pay car travel expenses their own staff would soon keep them informed.

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: One body should oversee this but it should be possible for local communities to take over the running of a local station provided there are proper structures in place to ensure safe operation.

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

Q27 comments: By making it much easier to set up community station companies. See ACORP in England and Wales.

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

Q28 comments: Major stations should remain under the control of the franchisee but for example between Perth and Inverness all the stations could be operated as community stations with Just Perth and Inverness regarded as major 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: Absolutely. I have still not forgiven BR for taking off the Clansman train that left Inverness at around 10.30am and went to Euston via the West Coast mainline. Both the DOT and Scottish Ministers should work together to get the best possible services for both sides of the border. Such services provide competition for internal services and vice versa and that should lead to a raising of standards all round.

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 is much more to Scotland than Edinburgh. This question would not be asked if the Scottish Parliament was based in say Perth for example.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: There can be no compromise on safety so the major area where costs can be reduced is in red tape.

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

Q32 comments: Facilities on board should reflect the traffic, medium to long journeys should have toilets, adequate luggage space and the provision of catering. Overnight trains should provide both proper sleeping accommodation and suitable recliner seating. Modern technology such as laptops, mobile phones etc. must be accommodated but so must those of us who wish to enjoy the journey without having to put up with the indiscriminate use of such technology.

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: It is a requirement of the modern age so must have a high priority to encourage such people to use the 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: make trains longer then you can provide for both.

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 not be permitted on trains except in restaurant cars serving food.

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

Q36 comments: Proper training of staff using PA systems and these people receiving the correct information promptly.

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: It must 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: Yes as it will hopefully increase competition and raise standards.

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 services could be better marketed and off-peak services could be priced to attract passengers to fill otherwise empty berths. Much better revenue protection is also required. Oban would be best served by a connecting train at Crianlarich. Is there a case for the Aberdeen sleeper to run to and from Inverness via Aberdeen thus serving the town between Inverness and Aberdeen.

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: The number of passenger journeys as against private car, carbon emissions per passenger, accident statistics per passenger journey etc. The use of existing infrastructure, albeit that it will need upgrading and improving.