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:

This proposal is interesting, but must avoid stifling innovation on those services classed as "social" – what is the incentive for an operator to provide better / new services on, say, a rural branch to try to rebuild passenger numbers, or provide better connectivity, if he is simply getting paid to run atimetable on behalf of the Government? Properly defining the minimum service for all routes (See Q18) will allow the proper fee to be determined for all services, economic or social, without the need to differentiate between the two. "Economic" services will develop as the franchisee sees fit, and this may even include routes previously though to be "social" ones. Therefore, a single-focus franchise is possibly more flexible in the long run.

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

Q2 comments:

The current justification for offering longer franchises is predicated on the argument that it encourages investment in new rolling stock (and infrastructure) because there is a perceived ability to recoup the investment over the extended franchise life. The consultation document notes that this is not necessarily a valid argument.

What is not so widely discussed is the impact that the longer period has on risk premium when the franchise bid is submitted - potential franchisees are being asked to take on increased uncertainty because their franchise extends further and further into an uncertain future.

The existing arrangement of approximately 7-year franchises works reasonably well; an improvement might be to have a 7-year franchise with longer extension options priced based on general economic parameters, combined with franchise performance, passenger numbers, passenger satisfaction ratings and the like, but also with an option to curtail at, say, 5 years, if basic minimum requirements are not met.

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

Q3 comments:
(No Comment)

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

> Q4 comments:
>
> (No Comment)

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

> Q5 comments:
>
> (No Comment)

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

> Q6 comments:
>
> (No Comment)

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

> Q7 comments:
>
> (No Comment)

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

> Q8 comments:
>
> (See Q2)

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

> Q9 comments:
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> Only *exceptional* performance should be rewarded with a bonus: The franchisee is entering into a contract to provide a set standard and level of service for a price – achieving that basic job performance may not be sufficient justification for paying bonuses. Substandard performance should carry a penalty sufficient to discourage poor performance in terms of punctuality, reliability, quality or level of service.
>
> It may be better to publicise at the start of the franchise some S.M.A.R.T "stretch targets" for which bonus incentives could be paid. For example, "If we reduce the journey times on route "x" by 10% through investment in trains / infrastructure, whilst maintaining the level of service at all the stations, we

will receive an additional payment of "y"." This would make it considerably easier to justify making such payments, whereas the current regime leaves the system open to press criticism along the lines of "your train is still late but ScotRail got a bonus".

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:

The regime should be aligned to individual routes. It is little consolation if you travel on a given route which persistently suffers lateness, cancellations etc. whilst effort, investment and focus is put on the rest of the "group" (whether a sub-group or the franchise as a whole is irrelevant).

Having a system for the whole of Scotland would allow the franchisee to sacrifice performance on less-preferred routes (e.g. Motherwell to Cumbernauld) whilst focussing on keeping the average up on his more favoured lines (e.g. the E&G or ScotRail Express groups).

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

Q11 comments:

The performance regime should be related to the journey stated on the ticket, not the eventual destination of the train (where there is often recovery time in the timetable to limit the number of "late" arrivals). This already applies to individual single / return tickets and takes account of the impact of broken connections.

For season ticket holders, the punctuality should be measured at the stations stated on the ticket and if *either* station falls below the trigger level, one level of compensation should be paid, with a higher level if *both* fail to meet the standard (this attempts to account for whether the ST holder is typically being inconvenienced in one or both directions). In addition, compensation should be payable for significant single incidents (>30min, say) in the same way as individual tickets, based on the ruling daily fare for the season ticket concerned.

The suggestion that the performance regime should be related to how heavily loaded a given train normally is is probably acceptable in terms of overall compensation payment back to the Government, but could be more easily calculated by adding a surcharge %age so that for every £1 compensation to which a passenger is entitled, an additional sum is refunded to the Government, based on the proportion of subsidy paid for that ticket. (This would mean that for services that return a premium, the passenger pays all the cost of running the train, so no compensation is payable to the Government, but on "social" services, the government would be entitled to a fair proportion of the compensation). *Ex gratia* refunds to passengers should be exempt so as not to penalise the TOC for "playing fair".

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

> Q12 comments:
>
> There is now sufficient operational experience to determine what normal journey time is achievable and therefore the introduction of padding to the timetable should be discouraged. However, if a given train is persistently unable to meet the timetable, the causes must be investigated before a relaxation is given. This is so that a TOC cannot mask poor operational organisation & behaviour at the expense of journey times.

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:
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> A SQUIRE regime is required – particularly for less high-profile stations where a franchisee might otherwise be tempted to cut back on maintenance spending.
>
> However, it is hard to see how the regime could reasonably be applied to aspects outwith the franchisee's control (e.g. on-track litter picking, lineside vegetation etc. that would be for Network Rail to control).

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

> Q14 comments:
>
> SQUIRE is probably a satisfactory regime, if it continues to be properly applied, and the inspection should be independent of the inspected.

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 current arrangement is not an absolute limit on standing time, but one beyond which compensation arrangements are triggered. Therefore removing this limit would not make better use of train capacity than at present, but would remove an incentive for the franchisee to provide sufficient rolling stock in the first place.
>
> Passengers do not pay significantly higher train fares in the expectation of standing for more than 10 minutes – otherwise one might as well pay less and stand on a service bus. One option might be to introduce a cheaper 3rd Class ticket for accommodation in a standing compartment, but this would entail

rolling stock alterations.

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:

Expecting passengers to use connecting bus services or drive to the remaining local stations was a feature of the Marples / Beeching cuts in the 1960's. It risks simply causing further modal shift to road transport with complete loss of the traffic to rail.

Making all-rail journeys more difficult or circuitous by introducing additional need to change trains is also undesirable (see Q29 response) – unless there is a demonstrable net *reduction* in journey time for the stations losing their direct connections beyond the interchange.

For example, whilst London – Glasgow journey times reduced with the introduction of the Virgin Trains "VHF" timetable, Motherwell *lost* most of its direct services and the journey time is now often 1 hour *longer* than necessary because one must first travel to Glasgow, change trains and then take a local train back.

On the other hand, in some cases it might result in a net journey time reduction - for example a stopping service terminating at Shotts, with a Glasgow – Edinburgh semi-fast calling at Shotts, all stations to Kirknewton and then fast to Edinburgh, met by a stopping service from Kirknewton to / from North Berwick to maintain local connections at the eastern end. This could reduce journey times provided that the interchange connections are properly arranged.

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 direct the frequency and journey time – a market-led timetable could, on some routes, result in a reduction in services making rail unattractive / impractical as a modal choice. It is sometimes necessary to run under-used off-peak services simply to enable passengers to choose rail for their peak time journey. For example, the provision of hourly services on the Shotts line (including the new and well-used express services) means that a peak time commuter can use the train, confident that if (s)he has to go home early unexpectedly, a train will be available. If the off-peak trains were not running, (s)he may take a car instead as insurance. Thus the peak train loses some traffic for want of an off-peak train. Also, if Scotland is serious about having flexible working practices to compete in the new global economy, a flexible train service is necessary to support this. It is not clear that a

specification for market-led timetabling would deliver this outcome.

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

Q18 comments:

The main considerations for service specification are:

- Minimum service frequency
- Maximum interval between trains (as distinct from "averaged" frequencies)
- First / last train availability, including the last train acting as a sweeper-up service and thus calling all stations at least on request.
- Point-to-point journey times (including between intermediate stations on that route, especially where skip-stopping / semi-fast trains are provided) and
- Standard of on-train accommodation.

These parameters should be at least equal to, or better than, the existing service unless there is compelling justification for reducing the specification.

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

Q19 comments:

(See also Q9 response)

There are a number of mechanisms available:

- Bonus payments for achievement of pre-defined stretch targets
- Allowing the TOC to keep operating cost savings achieved through innovative working practices / timetabling etc.
- Increased revenue from higher patronage.
- Allowing the franchisee to run *complementary* connecting road transport services (but not bustitution) where rail connection is not practicable (e.g. Northwest Scotland to / from Inverness / Mallaig / Fort William) and to derive profitable income from them.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments:

The fares policy should have the objective of encouraging a modal shift from road transport to rail in a way that achieves social justice and equality, not simply minimising taxpayer costs.

It should not be used to price demand off the railway.

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 ought to be subject to some form of cap – including those that are perceived to be set "commercially" so that there is a protection from localised monopoly if it is required. However, the cap may be more lax where competition from road or other transport forms is effective in controlling fares. Conversely, a tighter control may be desirable for services where less competition is prevalent (for example rural routes, or commuter routes where high rail fares would allow higher car parking charges or bus fares to be applied and so causing an adverse feedback between rail and road costs – leading to higher inflationary pressures generally).

Where possible, the fare for a railway journey should be related to

a) the cost of providing the rail service on that route and the overall number of passengers travelling that route and

b) be proportional to the comparable road journey cost (e.g. rail fare may be higher because of reduced journey time, greater comfort than service bus etc.).

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:

It depends on the nature of the upgrade. Where a line such as the E&G mainline is upgraded from an already good level of service and journey time, it is easier to justify a fares increase. Where the investment is "remedial", that is to say, bringing a poor service up to a reasonable standard, passengers would argue that this is what they should have been getting for their money all along and that a fare increase is not justified.

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 level of discount from the Anytime fare could be left as a matter for the operator – bearing in mind that Off-Peak and Apex / Value / Advance fares were originally introduced to try to sell unused seats cheaply to get *some* revenue, rather than none.

There is little that fares policy can do to encourage a shift in travel patterns – these are largely dictated by a need to travel (e.g. fixed working hours or specific need to be at a given place at a given time – e.g. flight departures, meeting times etc.). The Government would need to find a way to enable greater flexibility in working patterns than obtains at present in order to *enable* passengers to choose off-peak. Currently, it is often not an option, regardless of how cheap the tickets are.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:

Proximity to another station is not a valid reason to close a station, particularly in an urban setting such as the Cathcart Circle, or Motherwell / Airbles.

The overall increase in journey time for the predominant rail journeys from the affected station should be a key criterion. For example, whilst closure of a station such as Airbles may not increase the rail component of the journey, adding a half-hour walk across town to the overall journey is likely to act as a deterrent to rail as a modal choice.

Poor usage of a station should not lead directly to closure proposals: the railway should first be required to consider *why* it is so poorly used – for example, Breich Station is very poorly used, but this is hardly surprising given that it is a) half a mile outside the village and b) offered only one train per day in each direction. Is there scope for growth in its market that could be encouraged? Or should it be relocated nearer its market? Or would offering request stops on more trains encourage better use (see also response to Q17)

Furthermore, an explicit "use it or lose it" period of, say, six months could be considered in order to see whether a potential market can be developed for a station if it is being considered for closure.

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:

Third party support for new stations or services is to be welcomed as it helps to identify potential demand which the franchisee or Government had not recognised.

For example, specification of Strathclyde area services by SPT, rather than BR / ScotRail / central government, served the West of Scotland very well for many years, whilst other areas (notably Edinburgh and SE Scotland) suffered a decline in their train services which is only now being reversed.

However, introducing too many stations onto a route could lead to an unacceptable increase in journey times and the overall balance of benefit / disbenefit would need to be considered carefully. Similarly, introducing new

services, whilst generally to be welcomed, must not be done in a way that adversely affects punctuality and reliability on the rest of the network.

An example of this is the North Lanarkshire inspired Motherwell – Cumbernauld service (which could be better specified if it were to run from, say, Perth or Stirling to / from Carlisle providing much better connectivity with WCML services, rather than relying on inconvenient interchanges at / across / via Glasgow).

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:

Ideally, the maintenance of stations would be managed by one organisation; however, the interface between the station platform and Network Rail assets (the operational railway track, signalling, OLE and other structures) is such that this is not always practicable. The operational assets need to remain with the Infrastructure Operator in order to retain economies of scale and overall strategic planning that takes into account the reasonable entitlement of other stakeholders such as freight or other TOC services not to be unnecessarily disrupted.

This in turn implies that while the franchisee should be responsible for the general upkeep of his stations (cleaning, litter, painting, glazing, passenger facilities, lighting and the like), major engineering & building maintenance / renewal should lie with the owner – that is, Network Rail.

Consequently, the split of maintenance responsibilities is likely to arise from operational practicality, rather than purely procurement mechanism / commercial considerations.

The existing arrangements seem to be working well in terms of the overall cleanliness, upkeep and condition of stations.

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

Q27 comments:

Allowing use of otherwise redundant station assets (e.g. unoccupied buildings, former yards etc.) by community groups is to be welcomed provided that a proper formal arrangement is in place and commitment properly demonstrated. This might be in the form of a peppercorn rent - for example to enable reopening of a waiting room staffed by volunteers or lease of an off-platform area for horticulture to improve the station environs. Appropriate training (not full PTS, but perhaps a volunteer awareness competency) should be made available at reasonable cost and with a pragmatic renewal requirement.

Subleasing existing stations should be enabled, but not as a means for the franchisee to cut costs simply by substituting community volunteers for properly-trained paid railway staff, whose skills and commitment are key to

the passenger experience and quality of service.

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

Q28 comments:

I think that the categories proposed in Table 6 are adequate to define the functions of a given station (substituting Principal in lieu of Principle), but that stations should not be pigeonholed into any one category. Every station should be specified according to which one or more functions it fulfils. For example, Glasgow Central fulfils all six of these functions; Motherwell is (or ought to be) a Principal, Commuter, Interchange and Other station; Airbles is a Commuter / Destination (for Fir Park and Motherwell College) station.

All manned stations should have toilet facilities – this includes commuter stations. Put bluntly, some passengers may not be able to wait for the train to arrive with the toilet – the first train may not be the one they intend to travel on, and even then the on-board toilet is not always a) in working order or b) well-maintained.

Where practicable, stations served by Sleeper services should have access to local washroom facilities, although this is an area where third party / community involvement may be the most practical / economic way forward.

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:

*Cross border services should continue North **and West** of Edinburgh.*

Introducing a change of train for long-distance passengers on cross border services is likely to act as a deterrent to rail as a modal choice. Passengers on these trains generally fall into two categories:

Business users, whose primary factors in choosing rail will be journey time and cost and

Leisure users, who may have heavy luggage and children to look after.

Introducing a change of train at Waverley station will increase journey times by at least 10 minutes, assuming the connection is conveniently arranged. In some instances, where an hourly service obtains, the increase could be as much as 69 minutes. This is likely to deter business use.

Requiring passengers, who may already have travelled for some time on the long-distance service from England (and thus be tired), to transfer luggage across Waverley station will also act as a deterrent to rail as a modal choice.

Terminating InterCity trains at a major station will result in significant increase in platform occupation time (e.g. Virgin Trains West Coast turnaround is ca.

20minutes) compared to the 5 minute dwell time of a train which calls *en route* to another destination. This will result in a significant capacity constraint.

Finally, the suitability of accommodation in DMU stock operated on long-distance Scottish services would need to be considered in terms of increased passenger loading, luggage / cycle storage and the like.

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:

Terminating InterCity services at Edinburgh would be a retrograde step as noted in Q29, above.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments:

Franchisees should be invited to propose alternative methods provided that these are consistent with the existing rights and entitlements of other stakeholders, including Network Rail and the ROSCO's.

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

Q32 comments:

Toilets should be available on *all* trains, irrespective of journey length.

Catering should be offered on all InterCity routes, specific provision over and above a trolley (buffet / restaurant) being defined by the franchisee on a commercial basis.

First class should be considered for all journeys over, say, 1.5h, on tourist routes and where crowding means that passengers may be prepared to pay a modest premium for a better chance of getting a seat.

Electronic on-board reservation systems should be considered to enable a wider availability of reservable seats on the network (including nominally commuter trains that may form one leg of a longer journey).

Tables should be widely available, as should laptop charging points, even on commuter 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:

Priority should be given to the longest journeys (by time) where mobile data-networks are least available as this will be the market most likely to make use of communication services. This could mean that some flagship routes take second place if there is good mobile network coverage (actual, as measured on the train – not from the operators' maps) to, say, a more rural intercity route.

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:

The consultation document notes that 0.6% of the ticket sales generate 5% of the revenue; this implies that elimination of first class accommodation would require an overall increase in ridership of around 5 to 6% just to break even. Since most "first class" accommodation on ScotRail's existing DMU fleet is simply a substitution of 2+1 for 2+2 seating at broadly the same seat pitch, the additional three or four seats per unit are not going to achieve this. Nor is it going to make a significant contribution to reducing the number of standing passengers.

In some cases, the (re)introduction of first class fares, notably in the all-standard Strathclyde area could see an increase in revenue from passengers willing to pay a modest premium for a better seat – but this premium could not be the same differential as where, say, complimentary catering is included in the fare as is the case on the express routes.

A better solution might be the use of selective door opening to allow longer trains to operate on existing station platforms, or the introduction of end-coaches with specially positioned doors to allow some of the train to be off the end of the platform (subject to safety considerations).

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

Q35 comments:

The key is to avoid punishing the innocent moderate drinker alongside the problem consumers. A blanket ban would achieve precisely this.

There is nothing wrong with a group having a quiet drink on a train journey and causing no distress to anyone – yet a blanket ban would lump these passengers in with troublesome problem drinkers without any discrimination.

On the railways, the current risk-based approach for major sporting and other events appears to work reasonably well.

Therefore, the presumption should be against prohibition except where:

- A specific organised event is likely to lead to increased risk of trouble

- There is evidence of frequent or persistent trouble on a particular service (e.g. late Friday night) and that this is a result of drink being taken *on the train.*

In some cases it may be that trouble arises from passengers who are already intoxicated before boarding; this does not mean that every passenger should have to pass a breath test before boarding, otherwise many late Friday trains would have to depart empty, leaving crowds behind, but rather that boarding be denied to anyone whose *behaviour* indicates they present a significant risk. This means that reliance is placed on the discretion and experience of railway staff and the BTP.

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

Q36 comments:

The existing technological systems are reasonably good. Where the system falls down is when the information is not relayed in good time for passengers to take action to mitigate their delays (e.g. when cancellation of the 1805 Glasgow – Edinburgh semi-fast train is not announced until after the alternative – the 1814 stopping train – has already departed). Therefore more information as to what is going on, causes etc. need to be better communicated and not simply using stock phrases like "train fault".

Also, it would be useful if station announcements at major termini like Glasgow Central were relayed into the on-train PA. For example, where a platform alteration is announced, it is hard to hear from inside the 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:

The existing routes should continue to be specified so that each principal city and area in Scotland has equal access to London (and continental Europe).

In some cases, the Sleeper service is the only practical way to reach London before 0900. For example, none of the early West Coast departures from, and late arrivals into, Glasgow Central is readily accessible because of a lack of connecting services and the fact that Virgin Trains have been allowed to slash the number of services calling at Motherwell. Consequently, for meetings in London and access to Eurostar services to the continent, the Sleeper is one of the only practical rail options.

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:

The existing arrangements for the sleeper, whereby the traction and drivers are hired in from DB Schenker, but the carriages and other crew are provided by ScotRail appears to be a sensible one. Creating a *de facto* micro-franchise with its own administrative and other overhead costs that would otherwise be shared with the rest of the franchise risks losing economies of scale and be likely to *increase*, rather than decrease the cost of operating the service.

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:

Appeal

The appeal of the sleeper is threefold:

1 It offers a practical means of reaching London early in the morning, with onward connection to the continent.

2 It offers a civilised environment allowing passengers to arrive refreshed, rather than cramped into modern standard class accommodation on day trains.

3 It offers good value for money, combining train travel with hotel accommodation in the cost of the ticket.

Introduction of earlier / later "day" services is unlikely to change its appeal:

Virgin already offer early services to, and late services from Euston but these are of limited use because of their departure before / arrival after the first / last connecting trains – unless you can get to Glasgow Central by non-rail means, these trains are uncatchable.

In addition, why rise early to get a train, when you could fly slightly later and often for a cheaper fare?

Routes

The existing routes are, I believe, broadly the right ones to offer as they connect with most of the Scottish population centres. It would be better to examine the range of destinations offered in England – and the continent.

I do not agree that the Lowlander service should be concentrated solely on Edinburgh – the service from Glasgow serves a much wider catchment in West Central Scotland than simply Glasgow, so it is not fair to argue that there is a good connecting service to Edinburgh solely on the strength of the

E&G mainline. For many, Glasgow Central and Motherwell are the local InterCity stations and sleepers should continue to be provided there for the general benefit of all. However, some cost saving and service improvement could be achieved by rearranging the portions of the train for more efficient operation. For example, the Glasgow portion could run via Motherwell and Carstairs to Edinburgh, joining the Edinburgh portion and running via Newcastle and York either to Kings Cross or St Pancras, which would afford much better connections both to eastern England and to the Eurostar terminal at St Pancras International.

Equally, it does not seem to make sense to run the Fort William portion via Edinburgh – this could be split from the train at Carstairs (with a connection *from* Edinburgh) and run via Motherwell – Gartsherrie – Gartcosh – Cowlairs instead of crossing the width of Scotland twice just to marshal at Edinburgh. For that matter, a similar approach could be taken with the Inverness portion, running via Motherwell – Greenhill Junction – Stirling.

Continental Services

The renewal of the Sleeper rolling stock gives an opportunity to configure it in a way that facilitates introduction of Continental services that were originally mooted when the Channel Tunnel first opened.

Other Facilities

The sleeper should reintroduce the Family Leisure fare which was withdrawn some years ago to "simplify the fares structure", but in effect just put fares up for families and also means that a family of three cannot currently readily all travel together in an interconnected berth.

I do not believe that *en suite* accommodation is necessary *per se* on the sleeper as the journey is an overnight one, not multi-day journeys as found in continental Europe and America.

Of greater importance is the availability of shower facilities and proper lounges at the major destinations. For example, at Motherwell, the waiting room on Platform 1 is often cold and not an inviting place to wait for a train late at night.

Laptop charging points in each compartment would be desirable, as would a berth curtain for standard class passengers who have to share with strangers.

On-train Wi-Fi Internet, whilst a good idea, may not be all that well used – bearing in mind that the train is intended to carry sleeping passengers, not serve as an overnight "day" service. Further market research is desirable to determine how well-used such a service might be.

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 KPI's could include:

Carbon efficiency in traction (i.e. reduced diesel fuel consumption, more energy efficient electric traction forms (e.g. regenerative braking), minimising the running of diesel under the wires, driving techniques etc.)

Carbon efficiency in stations and buildings – targeted at reducing energy demand, supplemented by renewable energy (solar, wind etc.)

Maximising recycling of waste (including, for example, ticket stock, catering containers, timetable leaflets and the like).

Encouraging "green" travel to / from the station – for example by improving cycle facilities or co-ordinating train and bus timetable connectivity and the like.