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?

Whilst the dual focus franchise is an interesting proposal and better than the existing system, I think rail operations should be run on a mutualised basis. The mutual organisation should be controlled by a large representative council of Scottish rail users who appoint a professional board to run Scotrail. All profits would be reinvested in the network. The organisation focus would be on passengers and freight companies, not on shareholders, staff or directors. Simple as that.

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

I view the franchise as a monopoly so shouldn't be longer than the current 7 years or so.

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

No comment other than to question 1

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

No comment other than to question 1

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

No comment other than to question 1

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

No comment other than to question 1

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

No comment other than to question 1

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

No comment other than to question 1

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

No comment other than to question 1

10. Should the performance regime be aligned with actual routes or service groups, or should there be one system for the whole of Scotland?

No comment other than to question 1

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

No comment other than to question 1

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

No comment other than to question 1

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?

No comment other than to question 1

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

No comment other than to question 1

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?

No comment

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?

No comment

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?

The Government, in consultation with local communities should determine this.

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

No comment

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

No comment

Scottish rail fares

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

The network should prioritise efficient and low cost travel to work, over leisure travel.

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)?

All fares should be regulated and determined according to local and regional requirements and constraints. A standing conference of rail users, local government and the operators could determine priorities.

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?

No comment

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?

No comment

Scottish stations

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

Rurally I think all significant population centres should have a station, where there is a line passing through. For example the West Coast mainline should serve Symington, Thornhill and Moffat. The Stranraer line should really stop at Glenluce – why it doesn't is a mystery to me. In urban areas I think an even density of stations is required. In Glasgow there are plenty of stations on the Cathcart circle but very few in the north east of the city.

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?

No comment

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?

No comment

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

No comment

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

No comment

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?

Cross border services should continue to Aberdeen and Inverness, as they are important centres for the whole of the UK.

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?

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Rolling stock

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

The rolling stock should be owned on a not-for-profit basis – i.e. we shouldn't have to pay the debt service charge to the ROSCOs.

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

Generally I think the trains in Scotland have the right level of facilities, although long distance trains to Inverness, Aberdeen and the Highland lines could be made more comfortable for the long journeys. The West Highland line trains should have a viewing carriage incorporated.

There should be a greater emphasis on cleanliness with cleaning teams travelling on the network.

Passengers – information, security and services

33. How should we prioritise investment for mobile phone provision and / or Wi-Fi type high-bandwidth services?

No comment

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?

First class accommodation should be a very limited percentage of the rolling stock provision. The capacity is probably OK on the inter-city Scottish services but much too high on Virgin West Coast services.

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

Alcohol should be banned on trains – I have seen enough evidence of the discomfort it can cause.

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

Digital displays showing connections, route maps etc.

Caledonian Sleeper

37. Should we continue to specify sleeper services, or should this be a purely commercial matter for a train operating company?

Yes, the sleepers should be retained and subsidised.

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?

No comment

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?

The sleeper services may always have to be subsidised due to air travel alternatives, but they provide a crucial link to the south from Scotland's major centres. If new trains were brought into service to European standards with, for example, en-suite facilities in some coaches, this could raise the profile and popularity of the service. I don't think more early and late trains are alternative.

More crucially than the London sleepers, what we need is an Edinburgh – Paris sleeper via the channel tunnel. This could enable passengers to depart Edinburgh say at 9pm, wake up in Paris at 7am and then via high speed European networks be anywhere else is Western Europe by lunch. All the European sleepers have 'romantic' names – this could be the 'Auld Alliance'! I think this would be a serious alternative to air travel to the continent.

Environmental issues

40. What environmental key performance indicators should we consider for inclusion in the franchise agreement or the High Level Output Specification?

No comment