

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: I am wary of this option as it puts 'economic' and 'social' services into two separate compartments as though mutually exclusive. It also screams 'unintended consequences'. Sad but true – we as a nation display civic apathy and are less likely to become involved in community matters than the English. While the concept of local communities becoming more involved in the 'social railway' sounds good, it is unlikely this would take off in today's Scotland and the end result would be a worse service.

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

Q2 comments: Given that we are stuck with passenger service franchising and are currently prevented from dumping the failed model of rail privatisation dreamed up under John Major nearly 20 years ago, I favour long franchise periods (10 years plus) over the 'short-termist' mentality and lack of ownership engendered by short ones.

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

Q3 comments:

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

Q4 comments:

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

Q5 comments:

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

Q6 comments:

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:

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments:

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:

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

Q11 comments:

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

Q12 comments:

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: I think SQUIRE should continue as it has made a visible difference to the quality of service, particularly cleanliness.

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

Q14 comments:

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: I think we have to work towards accepting that where people have paid good money to travel by train, to have to stand at all is unacceptable. However, as a railwayman I understand how difficult this issue would be to manage, without imposing draconian pre-booking conditions on all travellers.

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: This is a fair idea if the station is comfortable, with good waiting facilities, and where walking distances between connecting services on different platforms are not excessive. Otherwise interchange penalties can be off-putting to travellers, particularly where station facilities are inadequate and there is a lack of visible public service. Perth is a good example.

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: Contrary to the stated aspirations under privatisation, the railway as structured now demonstrates less commercial responsiveness than BR ever did. TOCs like First ScotRail are 'lame duck' organisations that avoid taking responsibility, far less show commercial initiative. The Government **has** to direct service provision, supported by a robust system of public input through the local transport partnerships and the political process.

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:

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:

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:

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:

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: I'm not a socialist, but have come to the conclusion the only way to make a public transport system work is by politicians and other officials applying the principles of central planning, taking responsibility and **deciding** these matters. If local communities have a problem with it, let them speak up.

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: Fine if it happens, but I refer you back to my response to Q1.

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: The current split between Network Rail and ScotRail is nonsensical. I would like to see Network Rail take direct responsibility for management of all stations. Where maintenance activities take place on or near the line, they would also fall more easily within Network Rail's existing competence standards and organisational structure. Some routine maintenance theoretically the responsibility of the TOC cannot be carried out because ScotRail does not have properly qualified staff or contractors.

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

Q27 comments: Actually stopping some trains there would be a nice idea (witness the local stations between Dundee and Carnoustie, most of which have only two trains a day). Provide more locally-attuned publicity material which can be distributed to households and provided in shops, hotels, etc.

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

Q28 comments: Broad guide: (1a) Unstaffed station with shelter; (1b) Unstaffed station with shelter, ticket machine and car park; (2) Small staffed station with waiting room, toilets and car park; (3) Large staffed station with waiting room, toilets, refreshment facilities, bookstall and car park; (4) Major station with full range of facilities.

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: The introduction of Inter-City 125 services north of Edinburgh in the 1970s/1980s was one of BR's triumphs. Through services to Aberdeen and Inverness are hugely popular and compete effectively with air. They must continue.

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: The central belt bias of our decision makers is driving this. Living in Perth I can't see any benefits however, apart from increased takings at Upper Crust and Caffè Nero at Waverley station.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments:

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

Q32 comments:

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: Prioritise? Not sure, but as time progresses there will be certain things the travelling public considers to be essential, including high bandwidth WiFi.

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:

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

Q35 comments: Most people who drink alcohol during a journey are not making nuisances of themselves. An alcohol ban would not necessarily make much difference, as anti-social travellers do not necessarily need to be drunk to be obnoxious. It would be a shame to spoil the innocent pleasure of law-abiding people because of the activities of the minority.

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

Q36 comments: Where do I begin? Attention to detail is lacking. Electronic information displays have been upgraded, but for example didn't it occur to anyone to retain an arrivals board at Dundee along with that for departures? Across Scotland there is an excessive dependence on centralised, automated information systems which are fine when the service is running well, but end up speaking gibberish when it isn't. The system of automated announcements, both on trains and at stations, needs a quality overhaul. They are not 'smart' enough and sometimes fail to align correctly with train running (I have actually heard trains being announced at Perth as they are pulling out of the platform!). Remember that good quality 'real' announcements (such as one still hears at Haymarket) are infinitely superior to bad automated ones. The automated announcements on the trains are just irritating, especially when the conductor decides to do one of his own seconds before or after. As I said, a bit of attention to detail needs to be applied.

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: See question 17.

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:

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: I think you're caught in a cleft stick with the sleepers. The facilities at present are what can reasonably be expected. They will always run at a massive loss, but woe betide anyone who wants to incur the wrath of the Highlands by taking them off!

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: I have never seen the rail infrastructure look so neglected. Not only are litter, fly tipping and rampant, unchecked vegetation endemic, but Network Rail must be set objectives for keeping a clean railway. At present the railway industry allows its own people to abandon waste materials wherever they please. Given the potential for vandalism I don't know why this is not taken seriously. It would not be tolerated on the roads system, or among local authorities.