

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: 1. Does economic rail element mean the transportation of goods? If so, then I presume this will be organised separately, on its own terms, financially, and with due consideration for business needs..

2. Does social rail element refer to passengers? If so, then this should be under separate remit and passengers' needs and financial considerations should be paramount.

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

Q2 comments: I'm not sure what the optimum length of contract should be, but it should be sufficiently long-term for it to work without constant interruption (though if it shows failure there should be a fail-safe possibility available)

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

Q3 comments: I'm not competent to comment.

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

Q4 comments: Presumably this refers to franchisee/rail company sharing? Perhaps it should be equal to avoid controversy.

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

Q5 comments: What do you mean by third parties? There should be oversight by passenger /goods rail users as well as an ombudsman in conjunction with proper professional jurisdiction (cf Offcom etc)

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

Q6 comments: Rail users Must come before profits, or other company considerations.

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

Q7 comments: Trains must be safe, run on time, and be properly maintained.

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

Q8 comments: fining any company is inappropriate and financially restrictive – if money is taken away then it stands to reason it is no longer available to make improvements. Surely consultation and reasonable pressure from rail users and rail overseers to fulfil commitments within time frames is the best way forward. Mistakes must be rectified rather than punished, thereby promoting a mood of co-operation, not conflict.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: See above – incentivise, not penalise.

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: Scotland is surely compact enough for one whole system to operate, but with regard to actual routes.

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

Q11 comments: By listening to passengers, and acting accordingly.

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

Q12 comments: Allowing for safety, times should be geared to both passenger convenience and speed.

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, provided it doesn't become an end in itself and lead to harassment.

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

Q14 comments: Integrated overseeing arrangements, so that the head knows how the tail is wagging, or if it's wagging!!

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: Provided safety considerations are met, extra coaches should be added during busy times on busy routes; eg Leuchars to Edinburgh during rush hour.

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: Definitely. Recently the Edinburgh to London route has been stopped from allowing passengers to disembark at Peterborough, no reason given. This has made the interchange with Stanstead Airport, Cambridge, and other places, extremely inconvenient, necessitating extra time to change at Newcastle (with luggage, not a pleasant prospect)

No doubt it would make timing a bit more difficult if trains have to stop at many stations, however this downside would be offset by the added convenience for passengers. Perhaps one or two daily express services each way between mainline stations could also be timetabled (even charging a slightly higher fare).

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: Keep the government out! Simply because this causes chaos, especially if elections bring changes to governments.

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

Q18 comments: I'm not competent to comment.

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

Q19 comments: Innovation has to be monitored, or it could lead to passenger dissatisfaction. On the other hand, good ideas should be encouraged and

rewarded in some way. Ideas should be discussed by the wider user community before being implemented.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Passengers are discouraged by arbitrary fare rises. This is crazy when trains should reduce the use of cars to reduce carbon footprints. At present Scottish trains are well used. There has to be a good reason for increasing fares, and this has to be properly explained to users. Continental trains seem able to run realistically on lower fares (are government subsidies the only explanation?)

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: Flat rates should apply, as well as integrated fares across the whole country based on distances – it's ludicrous having different rates for different areas. Aren't there any other possibilities for regulation apart from government?

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: See above.

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: There shouldn't be any fare differences. People travel at different times according to their needs, not necessarily according to fare prices. Peak travel should require longer, or more trains, not fare differences.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Demographics should determine availability of stations. St Andrews, for example, has expanded so much that a new station and connection should be mandatory, to offset the overuse of existing unsafe roads east and west of the town

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: Both these local users understand local problems (see St Andrews, above). However, local authorities are hampered by financial considerations. Local businesses are already strapped for cash and I doubt they would either want or be able to fund a service, even though it might be viewed as enhancing their business.

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: That's for careful negotiation.

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

Q27 comments: By taking into consideration all that I've said above!

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

Q28 comments: All stations must basically be clean, with internal seating and toilet facilities. Only the mainline stations should be permitted retail outlets.

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: It is insufferable to suggest that Aberdeen to London services should necessitate disembarking at Edinburgh or Newcastle. This link is well used by several universities (Aberdeen, Dundee, St Andrews) Leuchars Airbase (open a bit longer, and anyway to be used by the army) commuters,

business people, and others. How many minutes could it possibly save the railway operators, at what cost in time to users?

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:Edinburgh is already a hub – leave well alone.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: I don't know.

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

Q32 comments: Long distance travel is already well served by trolley and bar – retain these, maybe improving the available food even more. All trains need toilets, but these need to be cleaned more regularly en route, as at present many of them are a disgrace. The long distance trains are also well served by staff regularly collecting rubbish en route – retain this too. Rubbish bins on most trains are too small, therefore disincentivising passengers from littering.

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: 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?

Q34 comments: Seating capacity should equate with luggage capacity, which is often lacking, especially in some older trains. Surely first class already exists if commercial viability is an issue?

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 thought this was already a proven issue? Alcohol should always be banned on trains, the same as smoking.

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

Q36 comments: Tannoy systems in stations often need to be improved. There's really no excuse these days for garbled loudspeakers mumbling incomprehensibly. Information boards are remarkably good on the whole.

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: You either provide a service or you don't. The Aberdeen to London service used to be both competitive and very good. I'm sure it is still needed.

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: Can't it be part of the overall train 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: The appeal is simply one of convenience, arriving fresh at the destination in time for a business or other appointment. I have used only the Aberdeen sleeper. As a single woman I do not like sharing a compartment with another unknown passenger, so I prefer to use first class.

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: Can't comment.

