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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: The demerit is in the definition of particular areas as social or economic. During the period of the franchise, particular routes may change.

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

Q2 comments: The franchise should extend over at least two elections of the Scottish Parliament. It should not finish any less than 18 months before an election. Reason – to reduce the opportunity of future decisions about it being taken for party political considerations.

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

Q3 comments: N/c

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

Q4 comments: N/c

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

Q5 comments: N/c

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

Q6 comments: Don't know

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

Q7 comments: Don't know

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

Q8 comments: Don't know

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: The franchise should specify what is required, there is no benefit in paying for more than is specified.

There is a difficulty with penalising poor performance. There could be circumstances where the poor performance arises from decisions made by parties over which the franchisee has no control.

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 performance regime has to recognise that the rail network is not uniform over the whole of Scotland – geography, climate, population density, socio-economic conditions all vary widely across the country.

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

Q11 comments: Could there be a formal consultation with Community Councils?

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

Q12 comments: Speaking personally as a passenger, I have often to plan my journey on the basis of being at a place at a specified time, the actual time spent on the train is only a part of the total and I do not wish to have to factor in time for the likely delay.

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: N/c

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

Q14 comments: See Q 11

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: Standing should not be acceptable for any length of time.

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 concept is used at present. There is undoubtedly some scope for more, but an over-enthusiastic application could be counter productive. Every interchange introduces significant potential for journeys to become more unreliable,

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: Yes and no – The Government should specify minimum values based on socio-political thinking, augmented by the franchisee assessment of customer demand.

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

Q18 comments: N/c

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

Q19 comments: Don't know if this is feasible or indeed desirable.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: The rationale for fares should be transparent and the base fare should clearly be based on a lump sum plus an amount directly proportional to distance.

The removal of mileages in the public timetables was a retrograde step.

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: Don't know

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: The balance between subsidy and fares is a political one.

As I understand it both the capital cost of providing new lines and making improvements and the operating costs of railways in the UK is much higher than comparable northern European countries.

At the present time and for the next few years, the man in the street is likely to experience a declining income when inflation is taken in to account.

These two things together suggest that it is totally unacceptable to consider fares rising above the rate of inflation throughout the franchise until both capital and revenue costs are reduced to no higher than the European average. Indeed for the first five years of the franchise the level of fares increase should be set at inflation LESS, say, 5%.

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: This is a difficult one. Many of the regular travellers are constrained on the times that they travel by considerations of work. I don't see that this will change markedly over the period of the franchise. I do not know what level of discount would encourage people who have a choice of when to travel to travel outwith the peak. If the differential is too great then there could be resentment among those who do not have the option but to travel at peak times.

Price may not be the only consideration – for many people convenience and comfort are factors which may be worth paying for.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: I suspect that it would not be helpful to set down criteria. Each case should be considered on its merits and if the capital cost is being carried by a willing third party then great care should be taken not to discourage it.

In recent proposals the increase in journey time has been cited in the decision not to provide a new station. I suggest that an increase of 2 minutes in a journey of 40 minutes is not significant.

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: The biggest issue is that of long term commitment to revenue, particularly if a substantial capital investment has been carried out (The ferry terminal at Campbeltown comes to mind.). I suggest that a commitment for the lesser of the length of the franchise or ten year, backed up with a performance bond would be necessary.

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: N/c

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

Q27 comments: Perhaps involving Community Councils. However, I suspect that in reality any such support will arise from small groups of enthusiastic individuals with a community spirit. More positive searching out opportunities by the franchisee.

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

Q28 comments: Suggestions are made as to the categorising of stations, and what is proposed has much to commend it. However, it would be important that there is transparency in how each station is categorised.

Of the types of station suggested there is one very obvious omission, that of inter-modal where a significant number of passengers change to some other form of public transport, eg bus or ferry, or private transport driven by a third party (what I'm thinking of the person who arrives leaves in a car / minibus

driven by someone else not for reward – wife, neighbour, friend, volunteer).
Some stations would fall naturally in to more than one category.

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: Yes. The difficulties which seem to be perceived are due to lack of co-ordination. Within Scotland the services should be conceived as a single entity, whether or not they originate south of Berwick or Carlisle.

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: No benefit in a hub other than creating passenger inconvenience.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: N/c

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

Q32 comments: Nowadays, the public expect a toilet on every train. The provision would need to be related to passenger capacity and length of journey. Provision at the level generally provided on charter and tourist flights is usually quite inadequate.

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: The use of mobile phones should be prohibited and jamming facilities installed.

Wi-fi may be relevant for some longer distance services.

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: There should be a long term scheme for increasing the length of trains to provide more accommodation.

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 see no reason to ban the consumption of alcohol on trains in general. There are arrangements to ban it on specific trains for specific occasions which seem to work.

If considering nuisance to passengers then there is a far greater need to ban the use of mobile 'phones.

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

Q36 comments: The TV monitors currently in use are woefully inadequate in respect of legibility; the use of rapidly changing pages and pages of irrelevant information do not assist in conveying information. Very often announcements

are of a music hall quality of 60 years ago.

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: Sleeper services should continue to 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: The service should be contracted separately, but the main ScotRail franchise should be able to bid. What is needed is a franchisee with a European vision.

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 service is not just a way of getting to London – it is the gateway to Europe.

Oban v. Fort William – It is probably be a moot point which is the better destination. Perhaps the best arrangement would be Fort William, but with a conveniently connecting train from and to Oban at Crianlarich.

In time en suite facilities should be the aim for sleepers.

Convenient connection at London to both Heathrow and St Pancras is essential.

Additionally, why should all the services end at London? Should trains run through to Lille or Paris?

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: N/c