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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: A single franchise would be better. More companies would cause confusion in the minds of passengers. An ideal example is bus travel, unless someone uses the bus they have no idea who runs it or where to go for a timetable.

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

Q2 comments: The present length is good, unless the franchise holder is going to invest in improving the railway. However there appears to be little interest on the part of franchise holders, or government, for the franchise holder to innovatively suggest ideas for or develop services.

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: Third parties can provide useful additional services if the Scotrail franchise holder or Transport Scotland are not interested in providing those services. An ideal example would be the 'Jacobite' tourist train service from Fort William. Although for tourists it provides a useful transport link and removes many car journeys from local roads each day. This type of enterprise should be encouraged. However, everything should be promoted and bookable through one company – Scotrail, so that passengers know where to go for information.

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: No comment.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Both, there should be incentives to expand services, and improve existing ones. Any request for improvement put to Scotrail is met with the reply 'that is a matter for Transport Scotland'. So it is, but I would expect a private company to bring innovation to the partnership and actively press for improvements. Otherwise what is the point of seeking private sector innovation – if there is none?

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: No comment.

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

Q11 comments: The SQUIRE system seems very good. However, there is a difference between the requirements of SQUIRE and what is actually delivered.

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

Q12 comments: Journey times should not be increased to improve performance. Better to occasionally be late than always latter but 'on time'!

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: SQUIRE should be sufficient, but should be more strictly

adhered to – especially with regard to train cleanliness.

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

Q14 comments: No Comment.

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: 10 minutes would seem reasonable for all routes in Scotland.

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: No, passengers appreciate direct rail services. Changing trains is not convenient, especially with luggage.

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, minimum service frequency and journey time should be specified, roughly based on current provision.

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

Q18 comments: No Comment.

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

Q19 comments: Yes, absolutely! At present there is no innovation or desire for improvement on the part of Scotrail who regard all improvements as a matter for Transport Scotland.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Rail fares should encourage greater use of the railway. Currently much of the railway operates well below potential capacity in terms of train length. Longer trains carrying more passengers don't cost a lot more to run (in terms of operating costs – there are capital costs) but do bring in much more revenue, reducing overall subsidy.

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, other than promotional tickets and advance purchase, should be regulated by 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: Improvements to the railway are vastly over priced. Very little is achieved for great cost. As a passenger I would prefer the railway to get their house in order than to charge more for improvements.

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: Cheaper off peak fares to encourage greater use at those times, but should people who have to travel be charged ever more? We should be encouraging rail use even at peak times. Older trains should be retained to operate long commuter services during peak times.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: I would not like to see any rail station closed. Many of the least used stations in Scotland (I would assume those the report refers to) have either a) very few trains calling at them or b) very little promotion. For example, Dunrobin Castle and Falls of Cruichan should be two of the most used stations rather than the least used! They serve very busy tourist destinations. However the railway does not promote their use. It was only the intervention and continual campaigning by a pressure group (Friends of the Far North Line) that resulted in Dunrobin Castle opening during the entire Castle open season. Why does the railway company have no interest in promoting its own services? It should also be noted that rail fares to many of these stations are very high – there are no ‘advance fares’ for example, which does not encourage use.

The maintenance of these stations is very costly, but the question needs to be raised as to why? The costs need to be reduced rather than stations closed.

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: This would appear to be a good idea. New stations at Dalcross, Glasgow and Edinburgh airports should be opened, together with St Andrews.

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: No comment.

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

Q27 comments: Make it easy for a community to get involved, and welcome and support their efforts.

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

Q28 comments: Stations should have good services. A ticket office may not be required, but why not have station hosts who look after customers, keep the garden (ie. Make it a welcoming environment), provide a waiting room / toilet facilities, help with / sell fares (if its more complex than a ticket machine could issue), and promote services – schools visits etc.

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, these are a real benefit to passengers.

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, this would be less convenient. Also from Easter till October at least the Highland Chieftain is very busy. How will these passengers be accommodated on a Turbostar, leaving aside that such trains are not as comfortable.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: No Comment.

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

Q32 comments:

Trains should be specified which provide:

Comfortable seating with plenty of leg room

Wifi

One toilet per coach

Plenty of luggage space, ideally a 'guards van'

Large windows which line up with seats

A selection of airline and table seats, and a choice of compartments or open seating sections, even if only in first class.

Catering should also be provided. Even if meals are prepared off train and reheated, it should be possible to buy breakfast, lunch or dinner on Intercity and long distance services, and not only in first class.

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: Most trains in Scotland run well below the length of platforms, there should be plenty of scope for running longer trains with room for both classes of accommodation. The only exception would be the Glasgow to Edinburgh corridor.

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 would suggest a blanket ban other than for designated restaurant cars or for passengers eating a meal. Alcohol is spoiling many rail journeys (from personal experience). As with the smoking ban, and even

being in possession of a ticket, staff need to be confident to enforce the rules.

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

Q36 comments: No comment.

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: Yes, this is an excellent service. It should be improved and better promoted. Do people in the south of England even know about it? Most don't and yet there should be at least as big a market for people heading north on holidays and trips. It should also be remembered that many towns that the sleeper serves (Perth, Fort William, Aviemore, have no alternative air service. Is there options for running to Elgin, and Oban also? Could the sleeper drop coaches at Manchester or Birmingham to open up another market in the south?

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: Would this not result in higher costs?

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: Being able to sleep while travelling and save on hotels is a huge advantage. However the beds have plastic mattresses which cause over heading passengers! The cabins could also do with better cleaning.

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: No comment.