

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: Certain routes will always be more profitable than others but the rail franchise should be for the whole of Scotland and not be awarded in a piecemeal fashion. Multi franchisees would add unnecessary complexity and cost.

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

Q2 comments:

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: Aberdeen and its surrounding area should now qualify for its own rail geographical identity such as the SPT and Lothian areas. This will allow greater autonomy and more accurate monitoring of service levels.

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

Q11 comments: The government needs to be very careful when specifying performance metrics as there are many examples in the current franchisee where decisions are made at the expense of passengers e.g. delayed intercity trains not stopping at intermediate stations but still meeting punctuality targets and local commuter rollingstock being commandeered to run intercity services when breakdowns occur. These examples manipulate the statistics and cause great inconvenience to passengers but allow targets to be met and senior staff bonuses paid.

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

Q12 comments: Reducing journey times, especially on intercity should be given less emphasis than reliability and choice of services. Passengers can plan for the predicted journey times however if there are large gaps in services they may choose another method of transport.

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:

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: Permitted standing times should not be increased. Regular monitoring of standing times should be increased in frequency to ensure rolling stock is added to if necessary.

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: One of the key selling advantages of rail compared to car or air is its ability to provide a simple point to point service. Adding extra connections or waits would reduce this advantage, especially for families, groups or disabled travellers.

One of the disincentives in this part of the network is the random nature of train times. In one notorious example, there is a 72 minute gap followed by a 55 minute gap in what is essentially a half-hourly service, and this is in breach of the franchise commitment. Regular clock face patterns eliminate this type of error, and make the service much easier to operate, easier to market, and can be better understood by the travelling public.

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: Franchise success should be based purely on number of passengers carried: Total peak + off peak.

18. What level of contract specification should we use the 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: Fares policy should be based on making rail economically similar to road equivalent pricing. The rationale is reducing Scotland's reliance on road travel and congestion. However success in increasing uptake needs to be accommodated by increasing rolling-stock capacity.

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 non-first-class fares should have a regulated cap on price, operators should be allowed to reduce fares to generate demand. Unregulated fares should be restricted to 1st class services where the operators can offer 'value-added' facilities to the journey. Any short-term offers should be regulated to offer a reasonable minimum number of seats at the advertised price.

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: Given the rationale of keeping fares close or cheaper than car alternatives prices should rise at a rate calculated to be close to the real cost of car travel.

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: The job of moving people at peak times will not disappear – fare differentials should be based on lowering off peak - not raising peak fares for a populace with little alternative apart from the car.

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments:

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:

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:

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

Q27 comments: Stonehaven already supports its station via Scotland in Bloom and the local Horizon voluntary group. Only cosmetic tasks should be considered however - the station structures should continue to be owned and the responsibility of the operator/Network Rail.

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

Q28 comments:

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: Cross-border need options to go direct - a minimum of 3 per day. Waverly and Haymarket are not suitable as interchanges due to their layout and overcrowding problems - options must be there for direct services. Timings specified by Scottish ministers.

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:

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: Rolling stock is key to a successful rail service and should not be targeted as an area to reduce costs. Stock should be specified by the government for minimum provision - need toilets, heating, insulation, little else.

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: Wifi - not an issue - will be obsolete by the time it's implemented in carriages as network mobile 4G services on the way. It is a misuse of investment resources. People will direct connect smartphones/tablets on their own accounts to network providers.

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:

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

Q36 comments: local autonomy - make decisions allows information to be given out more quickly - waiting for a phonecall from Glasgow slows everything down.

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: If the Sleeper service is separated out coordination will be problematic. Additional interfacing for information, maintenance, Network Rail are unnecessary if a single operator retains control.

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:

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: