

Stuart Taylor

## 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?

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

I agree with the proposal for franchises of 15 to 20 years, as this incentivises franchise holders to invest in large scale improvement projects.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Achieving reliability, performance and service quality**

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

Both.

10. Should the performance regime be aligned with actual routes or service groups, or should there be one system for the whole of Scotland?

One system is simpler to administer. Less funds spent on bureaucracy means more for investment.

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

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

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?

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

## **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?

I think this is a loaded question. Increasing capacity is the way forward, by lengthening platforms and trains. The ScotRail fleet is made up of Multiple Units which were chosen because they are inherently scalable.

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?

I think the current level of through services is just about right.

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?

The Government should set minimum standards.

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

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

### **Scottish rail fares**

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

Fares policy should be geared towards providing the lowest cost journeys for the greatest number of people, in order to encourage modal shift from car use.

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)?

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?

The rail network should be regarded as national infrastructure and funded as such. I would introduce changes along these lines:

- Reduce track access charges for TOCs
  - encouraging TOCs to reduce ticket prices, driving passenger uptake
- Increase direct government funding for Network Rail

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?

Peak means 07.00 – 09.30, 16.00 – 18.00

Lower off peak fares will be a key driver in encouraging off peak travel.

Motorway capacity is also lower at off peak times. There should be a financial incentive to encourage modal shift away from the car.

## Scottish stations

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

Station closure should be based on passenger footfall at peak and off-peak times.

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?

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?

I think the status-quo is adequate with regard to station management.

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

I think the most important aspect of "support" is uptake of rail services. As mentioned elsewhere in this questionnaire, lower fares is the key to increased uptake. Fares could be lowered by altering the financial model, increasing public funding of the infrastructure so that TOCs can charge less for tickets.

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

## 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?

Cross border services certainly should continue. In my opinion it is **crazy** to consider withdrawing these services. The main benefit of through services is simple journeys with minimal changes of train, very important for passenger groups including

- Families travelling with children (choosing not to use a car)
- Passengers with luggage, bicycles, wheel chairs, prams etc
- Elderly passengers, foreign language speakers, the disabled or other

groups for whom a train change is an inconvenience

In addition, each change of train requires an additional seat reservation (or competition for available unreserved seating).

I can think of no benefits to passengers by withdrawing cross border through services which have existed since the rail network first began.

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?

## **Rolling stock**

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

Branded rolling stock, with large scale exterior advertising, is commonly featured in some European countries such as Germany.

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

## **Passengers – information, security and services**

33. How should we prioritise investment for mobile phone provision and / or Wi-Fi type high-bandwidth services?

Free Wi-Fi connectivity is increasingly expected at transport hubs and on journeys. Many coach operators, and European rail providers, are delivering this already.

Wi-Fi provision should be free.

Mobile phone provision (3G and soon 4G) is fine in my opinion.

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?

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

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

## **Caledonian Sleeper**

37. Should we continue to specify sleeper services, or should this be a purely commercial matter for a train operating company?

Sleeper services should be continued. They provide a vital link to London for

customers outside of the Edinburgh / Glasgow catchment area. They bring valuable tourist revenue directly into remote communities.

Due to the age of the sleeper rolling stock, investment will be required to continue these services. In my opinion this investment is well justified, even if this means the service is operating at a financial loss.

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?

The Caledonian sleeper should remain integrated within ScotRail. It feeds into connecting services to remote parts (North Highland, Kyle Line, Oban) for which connections are key. Integration also helps minimise the inconvenience to passengers when the sleeper service is disrupted; passengers travel to the nearest available sleeper departure point by connecting ScotRail services.

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?

The sleeper services have operated to these same destinations for decades, and should continue to do so.

Part of the appeal of the sleeper is avoidance of the “red-eye” early morning journey. I regularly use the sleeper between my Helensburgh home and my office in the City. I can be at my desk in London by 08.30. Not even the reddest eye flight can deliver that sort of timing.

### **Environmental issues**

40. What environmental key performance indicators should we consider for inclusion in the franchise agreement or the High Level Output Specification?

Compared to the environmental footprint of the car and plane, I do not consider this item a priority. Cost and service continuity are the major factors in my opinion for Rail 2014.



