

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: Given the size and integrity of Scotland there should be a single franchise operated by a not-for-profit publicly-owned company

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

Q2 comments: 7years with scope for extension to ensure long-term development of the network

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: Joint ventures with local authorities where appropriate

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

Q6 comments: By creating a not-for-profit publicly-owned company (cf Scottish Water) to run the Scotrail franchise

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: Incentives are more productive, to ensure imaginative innovations to increase use of rail services

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: There is a need to factor in the potential “performances” of different routes (ie: availability of alternative routes or existence of single-track routes)

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

Q11 comments: Better customer relations

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

Q12 comments: Published journey times should be consistently deliverable

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, and should cover every area of the traveller's experience from initial enquiry to journey completion

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

Q14 comments: Better responsiveness by staff and better information at stations

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 is not acceptable except in inner-urban/short journeys. Train capacity should be sufficient to cater for peaks such as sporting events, exhibitions, weekend and holiday peaks. Rail usage will increase when seats are virtually guaranteed to all travellers

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: Interchange facilities should be increased to enhance journey options (and thereby to reduce journeys made by car): this will require some rebuilding of stations to create cross-platform interchanges (eg: Perth). This will help to demonstrate where new direct services might be introduced. However, it is already evident that there is scope for more direct trains from Inverness to Glasgow, and from Ayrshire to Edinburgh via Glasgow Cross and Falkirk, and from South Lanarkshire via Shotts or Falkirk; and from Fife to Glasgow

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: It is necessary to specify minimum service provision such as frequency, first and last trains, Sunday services, and access to all main towns and educational centres by 9am, and departures from all main towns after the working day, and again in late evening. A regular-interval timetable throughout the network would be a most useful innovation. Poorly served routes, such as the Oban line, should have an enhanced service

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

Q18 comments: A high level of specification, but with scope for additional innovation by the franchisee

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

Q19 comments: A bonus based on passenger numbers

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments: Everything should be aimed at maximising passenger numbers, especially on lightly-used services. Nothing should act as a disincentive to travel, especially "impulse" travel.

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: Train fares should be such that they work out cheaper than taking two adults by car, regardless of route. Indeed the fares should taper downwards the longer the journey to incentivise longer journeys by rail

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: Fares should be reduced and revenue will increase. Taxpayer “subsidy” should be seen as a contribution to the wider benefit of the economy, and to social, environmental and energy reduction goals.

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 should be a differential to encourage off-peak travel, but it should not be punitive for those who have to travel in the peak. Since the evening peak is more diffuse, restrictions for the evening peak might usefully be withdrawn

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Stations are required alongside every community (such as larger places like Bannockburn and Bonnybridge), to be determined is consultation with local authority development plans. Lightly used stations should not be closed unless adjacent to another, but every opportunity should be taken to enhance use through better local publicity and regular interval timetables. Local authority plans should be encouraged to create new development alongside railway lines, not away from them. Recently re-opened lines and stations demonstrate the potential of new stations. Within Highland, Inverness Eastside, Kirkhill, Conon Bridge, Evanton, Dornoch (on diverted line) and Halkirk are illustrative cases

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 is to be encouraged, but specifications and construction costs of new stations seem to be disincentives: there is a need for simpler structures, especially on rural lines (cf Beaulieu)

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: A single franchisee should take responsibility for stations to simplify management, to improve the traveller's experience, and to reduce overall costs

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

Q27 comments: There are good examples (ie on the West Highland Lines), and commercial and community initiatives should be encouraged to make stations a community hub. More foot-fall around stations will improve security, and draw those who are not rail-users to see the facilities and services on offer.

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

Q28 comments: This depends so much on local circumstances, and the availability of services, say, within 50 yards of the station. There is scope for liaison with local user bodies, community councils and local authorities on a station-by-station basis.

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: Services from Inverness and Aberdeen to London are vital for economic and social reasons and must be maintained, perhaps by Scotrail running the trains in association with the Caledonian Sleeper. There is a case for new cross-border services from Aberdeen and Inverness to serve Birmingham (as did the one-time "Clansman") but routed via Manchester: this would help to reduce air services between these points. The problem of lower loads north of Edinburgh on cross-border services could be addressed by joining Inverness and Aberdeen sections at Edinburgh to run as one train to/from Edinburgh

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: Certainly not: changing trains is a disincentive, and will not win passengers from direct air services. Edinburgh, of course, will remain a hub for shorter distance services within Scotland

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments: A new Scottish franchise should empower the ownership of rolling stock to cut out the high costs of leasing. More electrification of lines within Scotland will enable cheaper electric rolling stock to be obtained, ensuring the flexible use of rolling stock across the system

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

Q32 comments: Short-distance services need little beyond basic facilities. However, longer distance services of over 100 minutes deserve far better facilities such as toilets, better heating, lobbies to contain cold air when doors are open, more comfortable seating, alignment of seats with windows and better provision for luggage and cycles. Catering trolleys should be the norm for at least part of every journey. On scenic rural lines dedicated rolling stock should be provided with panoramic windows and facilities for on-board audio-description for tourists

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: Best on longer distance routes and the main Edinburgh – Glasgow routes

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: First class could be restricted to cross-border services only IF – and only IF – other long distance routes have rolling stock with smaller compartments to create quiet zones.

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 have an open mind about this, but train staff should have more powers to eject disruptive travellers – perhaps to give them the status of a Special Constable (as in Norway)

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

Q36 comments: Better layout of timetable boards, designed in a more reader-friendly way. Regular interval timetables on all routes will assist travellers to memorise the times. In areas served by railway the local timetable should be circulated by mailbox drops: too many people are totally ignorant about the

service on offer.

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: This matter seems now to be assured.

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: It should be part of the Scotrail operation

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: Publicity for the Caledonian Sleeper is poor, and its appeal could be better promoted. Earlier/late trains would not help Aberdeen/Inverness/Fort William travellers. Fort William perhaps offers the better growth prospects, although Oban serves a wider range of onward connections by ferry. To cater for this there should be a connecting service into/from the sleeper between Oban and Crainlarich. Given Fort William's status as the Outdoor Capital of the UK there is scope for the provision of "couchette" coaches to cater for the budget-conscious climbing and walking fraternity. These have the advantage that in daytime mode they may be used on other services.

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: More rail travel, modal shift from car and plane achieved by a better fare structure and marketing, better trains and simpler timetabling.