Consultation Questions

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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:

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: There is no reference I can find in the document to research undertaken about experiences in other comparable countries where rail franchising exists. The decision about terms for third-party involvement should be informed by this research.

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

Q6 comments: There is no reference I can find in the document to research undertaken about experiences in other comparable countries where rail franchising exists. The decision about structuring and incentivising achievement should be informed by this research.

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: holding the Chairman and CEO of the franchisee accountable in person to the relevant committee of the Scottish Parliament

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

> Q9 comments: Both incentivise good performance and penalise poor performance

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:

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

> Q11 comments: Make greater use of technology to enable passengers, and those who wish to be passengers, to feed back on their experiences and express their aspirations. Include in this the views of visitors to Scotland, given the importance of the revenue and economic growth they bring into the country.

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

> Q12 comments: achieving reliable performance (eg arriving on time) is more important than journey time. I'd rather have a journey take 10 minutes longer (eg Edinburgh-Aviemore) and arrive on time – because "recovery time" is built into the timetable – than arrive late and miss my onward connection. Take visitors' views on this also.

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; all aspects.

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

Q14 comments: (a) Measuring and publishing data on instances where train capacity – for example, for the carriage of bicycles – is known to fall short of demand, eg on-line, personal telephone booking systems logging occasions when customers cannot obtain the accommodation/journey they require. (b) measuring and publishing data on the instances where the seat reservation system has failed – a commonplace occurrence on routes such as Edinburgh-Inverness. The views of visitors from elsewhere in the UK and overseas (perhaps sought through or with the help of VisitScotland) would help inform the decision about this issue.

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: No: I don't think you can increase permitted standing time beyond ten minutes, nor increase the capacity limit. There are however many instances where the length of the train is well below the platform capacity of the stations at which it calls (eg Edinburgh-Inverness) and the train provided is well below the capacity required for the passengers using it – you can do something about that, especially given the loading data which you will obtain from advance ticket sales and reservations. You could also improve the reliability of the seat reservation system: there are frequent instances (eg Edinburgh-Inverness) where this fails and, for example, passengers with walking and standing difficulties are unable to obtain their reserved, or any, seat.

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, the number of direct services should be maintained or increased. With a population whose mean age is rising, but whose abilities to walk and negotiate stations unaided is reducing, the direct services provide an invaluable way of travelling that minimises the demands on "special assistance" services and provides a high level of customer care. The recently introduced Edinburgh-Helensburgh service is an example.

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: The Government should have the ultimate power to make such directions but should ideally determine jointly with the franchisee the frequency and journey times, taking into account high-quality customer feedback and aspiration.

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: The Government should introduce an awards/prize programme involving customers, the franchisee and other suppliers/stakeholders which awarded grants to assess the feasibility of new ideas as well as rewarding the best innovations. . An example is the UK National Cycling-Rail Award for Innovation.   This could be linked with relevant Scottish Government "year themes" eg Year of Creativity

The franchisee should also be incentivised to actively achieve inter-connections between rail travel and other forms of transport (bus, ferry) so that connection times are helpful to passengers and reliably achieved.

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments:

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:

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:

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 difference should be greater than at present so as to encourage more people to travel outside peak hours and thus address the issues of overcrowding alluded to in Q15

Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: By engagement with the local/user community, using appropriate consultation processes – which probably means not just Community Councils, given that many are poorly attended or failing.

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: I'd encourage this; the more we can engage the railway service with the community, and with the development of business, the better.

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: It doesn't matter much whether one or two or more organisations are responsible for managing and maintaining stations, so long as they talk and listen to each other to provide a high, joined-up standard. Much more important is the quality of the link between the organisation that decides, minute by minute, which train will take priority over another; the franchisee; the station operators; and the operators of the public information systems.   Recent experience suggests these links are variable and unreliable, especially when there is disruption on the network.

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

Q27 comments: by a concerted campaign at local level (and national level if appropriate). The Community Councils in Scotland are less successful now than when first established at representing their communities and can't be relied on alone as the medium for such encouragement.   Use of technology such as Facebook and Twitter, local radio stations and contact with the emerging community development trusts would encourage this kind of support.   In addition, the provision of a fund for small grants or matched-fund grants to enable local projects would help.

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

Q28 comments: The proposed categorisation in the consultation document looks fine – but the largest type is spelt "principal" rather than "principle". All stations, irrespective of category, should have: disabled access to both directions of travel by ramp or failing that, by lift; CCTV coverage; help points;

lighting; shelter from the weather; a real-time train information system (TV monitor); current printed (broadsheet) timetables; bicycle parking; car parking including disabled parking; details of how to obtain a taxi, local map, signposting to nearest village/town centre; signposting to nearest National Cycle Route. Stations in areas popular with visitors or others from outside the UK should also provide information such as that above in other languages appropriate to the requirements of users/visitors. See also the answer to Q39 below.

Another facility required at all stations is also safe and appropriate access (eg tarmac paths at least 3 metres in width, or quiet public roads, with lighting in either case) for cyclists to the station. The failure to provide such access when the Airdrie-Bathgate railway line was opened suggests that this is by no means a presumption amongst those who manage the franchise process nor those who oversee rail services in Scotland. .Living as I do near the route of the Edinburgh-Tweedbank railway line, it is important to me that I can safely cycle to and from the nearest station, and other stations, on that route.

See also the Scottish Government's Cycling Action Plan for Scotland which, on page 27, refers to the SQUIRE process and Transport Scotland's own research into cycle storage provision at stations. .This research should be factored into the issue of bike parking at stations when the franchise is being formulated.

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, cross-border services should continue to go north of Edinburgh. These services benefit passengers through avoiding the need to change trains (eg London/Berwick to Aberdeen); taxpayers also benefit in that business travellers (who pay tax) will be able to work effectively on the long-distance services more productively than if they travelled by air.   It's worth remembering that many Scottish families have relatives and friends in England and Wales, and the cross-border services significantly enable family communication, especially when elderly people are concerned. The Department of Transport should specify these services, ideally discussing the specification with the Scottish Ministers if the latter will consent to do so.

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. Many cross-border services already terminate at Edinburgh and allow Scottish connections. There already is an Edinburgh Hub, and I see no value in further increasing the volume of passengers

changing trains there given the limited facilities available at Edinburgh Waverley.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments:

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, irrespective of the route, should provide space for the carriage of bicycles. The number of spaces per train on individual routes should be determined jointly by Transport Scotland, Cycling Scotland, and Sustrans. The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, together with the Scottish Government's published targets for modal shift from motor cars to cycling and walking, suggest that the demand for bike carriage on trains will rise significantly during the period of the franchise, and there provision requires to be made accordingly. A personal view is that "long-distance" services (eg Edinburgh-Inverness, Glasgow-Aberdeen, Far North line, Kyle line) should carry a minimum of 12, reservable, bike spaces per train, with 4 of these being able to double as wheelchair spaces. Edinburgh-Glasgow services and services to/from ferry terminals should carry the same numbers, but not necessarily reservable.

In addition, all trains should carry toilets with disabled access and wifi. Long-distance and Edinburgh-Glasgow services should also provide first-class accommodation and on-board trolley-based catering.

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: You should give high priority to Wi-Fi services on all trains in Scotland, and secondly work with the mobile phone service providers to overcome gaps in mobile coverage. WiFi is increasingly expected by business travellers, who already enjoy the service on services provided by some other train operators.

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: Consider raising first class peak fares and reducing off peak first and standard fares. Some first class passengers choose that class solely to obtain the necessary leg room to be able to get into and out of a seat.

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

Q35 comments: The evidence I have is that on-train staff are neither consistently willing nor able to tackle passengers whose behaviour, due to alcohol, is disturbing or threatening to otherIf not, I'd support a total ban on the consumption and sale of alcohol on all trains.

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

Q36 comments: By concentrating on seeing the information provision from the passenger's customer's view better, and working towards "one version of the truth" especially when services are disrupted due to weather or other problems.   There have been some spectacular failures within even the past year, where the station TV monitors, the PA announcements, the station staff and the Customer Services team in Fort William, and the train crews in the station all had different version of what was happening and would be happening.   This is the biggest single challenge regarding travel information.

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, we must continue to specify sleeper services, on the existing routes. Given the Scottish Government's targets on travel and CO2 emissions, this service offers a positive option to air travel, which it's generally accepted is more environmentally damaging. Many travellers want to do more for the environment and removal of this service would suggest the Scottish Government is only selectively serious about it.

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: What works best in other countries that operate sleeper services – have you researched that, and with what results?   The option which most effectively obliges the franchisee to upgrade or replace the sleeper rolling stock as a matter of urgency would get my vote.

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? The appeal of the Caledonian Sleeper lies in two areas: (1) it uniquely enables me and other business travellers to do a full day's business in London, including perhaps dinner with a client or

family member, and then to be at my desk or home in Edinburgh at an early hour, if required.   No configuration of existing air or daytime rail services can match this for efficient use of time. (2) it's environmentally much more responsible that return air travel.

Earlier day trains would have to leave Edinburgh or London at around 4.30am to reach the other destination by 8am; later evening trains would have to leave around 10.30pm, arriving around 2.30am; none of these timings are remotely attractive, so no, the appeal of the sleeper would not 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? Inverness and Aberdeen are correct destinations. The Inverness service also connects to the Aviemore area, popular with visitors. Oban would provide connectivity to a range of ferry services and should be actively considered as a destination, particularly to attract visitors from London and elsewhere in England and overseas.

- What facilities should the sleeper services provide and would you pay more for better facilities? : In addition to all existing facilities, the sleeper services should provide wifi and laptop/phone power in cabins, morning newspapers, and the option of en-suite toilet/wash-basin facilities. I would pay an additional 20% of the fare per journey for ensuite toilet and WC. Experience of other sleeper services train operators should be polled in making this decision. The need for shower facilities on the trains would be reduced if the at-station facilities were of a standard comparable, say, to a business class airport lounge (eg British Airways at Gatwick), for which I would pay £20 to use a shower of that standard. .

Q39 comments: Supplied in red text above

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: The three principles to be given priority in para 12.8 of the consultation document make sense. However, given what is said in para 12.6 and in the Scottish Government's Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, about "modal shift", and amid the same Government's concern about obesity and health in Scotland, I am surprised that you do not contemplate a Key Performance Indicator which is related to modal shift from private car to walking, cycling or bus. The overall quality of the passenger rail services in Scotland, and the extent to which they provide for and attract passengers who start, finish or continue their journeys as cyclists, pedestrians and bus users will have a material impact on decisions made by individuals and by

households about the mode(s) of transport they use for utility, recreation or commuter journeys. That's where "modal shift" occurs, and I feel strongly that the Scottish Government should introduce to the franchise a KPI regarding modal shift, among passengers starting, finishing or continuing their journeys, to cycling, walking and bus use in line with the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland.