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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:

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:

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

Q11 comments:

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

Q12 comments:

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: Trains from Waverley to Dundee and Aberdeen around the two rush hours are always very crowded. Additional capacity is needed either via more services or additional carriages to ease the congestion. It is not acceptable that, as sometimes occurs, passenger stand from Waverley to Leuchars.

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: I know there is a tension between getting a faster service between Aberdeen and Edinburgh by having trains not stopping at any stations south of Dundee and providing an adequate service from intermediate stations in Fife – notably Leuchars. But at present the morning service from Leuchars to Edinburgh is inadequate there being no service between 7.49 and 8.40. There is an Aberdeen service which stops at Dundee at 8.20 (but not at Leuchars) and arrives in Edinburgh at 9.29. Having this service stopping at Leuchars would fill this 1 hour gap in the morning timetable.

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:

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:

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:

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:

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: Each of the claimed benefits is commented on in turn

- *Finance: greater revenue return to the Scottish franchisee (increasing attractiveness of subsequent franchises) and reducing subsidy from the taxpayer for services in Scotland* This is based on the inaccurate premise that as a tax payer I am only concerned with the costs incurred for services in Scotland. The undoubted benefits of retaining services by East Coast and Cross Country north of Edinburgh (see below) far outweigh the perceived benefit to the taxpayer in Scotland in withdrawing these services north of Edinburgh. As a UK tax payer I am also providing a subsidy to the cross border services which I value highly and wish these services to continue beyond Edinburgh.

- *Resilience: all passenger franchised services within Scotland would be provided by one operator which would make it easier to provide services during periods of bad weather.* The alleged inconvenience of having more than one operator to consider during periods of bad weather is again overruled by the many benefits of having more than one operator north of Edinburgh (see below). Since East Coast and Cross Country would still be operating into Edinburgh and, for the former, Glasgow, the alleged simplification of only having one operator across Scotland would not be realised and the alleged savings are likely to be small.
- *Control: all services are controlled by Scottish franchise with no reliance on DfT franchised services for connectivity.* Again a spurious argument based on the implicit assumption that Scotrail (or subsequent franchisee) would provide improved connectivity if no East Coast and Cross Country north of Edinburgh. In my experience Scotrail does not provide high level of connectivity between its own services when they are running according to the timetable or are running late. The additional services provided by East Coast and Cross Country help fill gaps in service when Scotrail is running late.
- *Simplicity: all services provided by one operator, removing any duplication and inefficiency, and allowing greater network/timetable freedoms for the Scottish operator.* Again an unconvincing argument. What is deemed *duplication* to the rail user is a better service with more options for travel between stations. The greater network/timetable freedoms means a worse service for the passenger – especially if, as is implicit in other parts of this consultation, the subsidy from the Scottish Government is reduced.

Given all the above responses, the choice between the DfT and Scottish Ministers in terms of specifying the services is unnecessary. As at present, the cross border services should continue to be provided on the basis of joint-decision making by DfT and Scottish Ministers.

Your perceived drawbacks are severe and completely outweigh any perceived benefits. Again I comment on each in turn

A perceived or actual time penalty in having to change at Edinburgh for a journey that might have been previously direct, with the potential consequence that passengers choose instead to use other modes of travel to their final destinations.

1. The only likely alternative mode of transport is air travel to London or beyond or travel by car for nearer destinations. The carbon footprint of such alternative modes of travel, when compared with the train, is substantial. In keeping with the mantra “A Greener Scotland” and the

implementation of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2010, this represents a major disbenefit.

2. There is also the question of convenience. Through travel from stations north of Edinburgh to destinations in England means that there is no journey change in Edinburgh – a very significant benefit for the infirm, the elderly and those travelling with young children or with several items of baggage.
3. Scotrail trains have grossly inadequate baggage facilities and have too few carriages to cope with peak traffic. Living in St Andrews, I dread to contemplate travelling north of Edinburgh on those days when students attending St Andrews, Dundee or Aberdeen University are arriving or leaving university, or when there is a major golfing event in St Andrews.
4. The time penalty is also significant – when travelling to England from Leuchars I always seek a through service to reduce the travel time in addition to the added convenience.

Onward connectivity will be crucial to the success of the hub scenario and we would look for increased service frequency and journey opportunities, so that the maximum value could be obtained from this arrangement. Increased service frequency would not compensate for all the disbenefits itemised above.

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:

For the reasons noted above, I see no additional benefits in terminating cross-border services at Edinburgh.

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: Modern rolling stock should provide electric sockets for charging laptops and mobile phones.

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: New rolling stock and re-furbished rolling stock should have the provision of High-bandwidth wifi included in the contractual specification.

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 services should continue to be available on most trains. Guards should have the discretion to waive access to first class accommodation by passengers with standard class tickets when the train is over-crowded.

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 consumption of alcohol can lead to rowdy and disruptive behaviour which upsets and offends other passengers. A ban on the consumption of alcohol is unreasonable but guards should be encouraged to constrain usage when it is likely to result in other passengers being unduly disturbed. The threat of reporting to the Transport Police would assist in maintaining appropriate levels of alcohol consumption.

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

Q36 comments: The loud-speaker system at Haymarket is not fit for purpose. The announcements are inaudible – the system needs to be replaced.

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:

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:

- *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?*

I have a very high regard for the current Caledonian Sleeper Service as someone who has used it, and its predecessors, for over 20 years in order to attend meetings in London. The ability to board the train in Leuchars, have a good night's sleep and leave the train at 8.00am in central London is infinitely preferable to waking at 4.00 am and driving to Turnhouse to get an early morning flight from Edinburgh. I also take very seriously, as I am sure the Scottish Government does, the differential of these modes of travel in terms of their respective carbon footprints.

The London to Aberdeen service is not very convenient for those who wish to travel to stations between Edinburgh and Dundee as it means leaving the train very early in the morning. As a result, typically on my return from London, I usually take the London to Edinburgh service which leaves just before midnight and a connecting train in Edinburgh so that I arrive in time to commence work in Dundee at 9.00am. A service that left London just before midnight but decanted passengers

between Edinburgh and Dundee at more practical times – say 7.00 to 8.00 am would suit business travellers better.

- *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?* A service to Oban would be of real value to those who wished to travel up from London and then on to the Inner Hebrides by ferry.
- *What facilities should the sleeper services provide and would you pay more for better facilities?*

The current rolling stock is very old and needs a complete upgrade – especially in terms of the quality of the ride. Better suspension, as in modern continental sleeper services would make this a more attractive option for which I would be willing to pay a premium. The lounge car is a real plus and the staff very friendly and helpful – but the lack of wifi and electric sockets to plug in lap tops and/or mobile phones are major deficiencies. All modernised rolling stock should now provide wifi and re-charging sockets in both the sleeping cabins and lounge car.

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: