

**Martin Wilkinson**

## **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: I am very much in favour of longer franchises e.g. 15-20 years, with suitable get out clauses in case of really poor performance, in order to allow the franchisee to invest with a realistic chance of getting a return for their investment. However this might make more sense if there is some vertical integration with the Scotrail franchise holder having more responsibility for the infrastructure. That must be tempered with safeguards for longer distance companies operating into Scotland, and for open access operators which have had some success down south but have not yet tested the Scottish scene.

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: In principle we should do both but we should be careful not to be trivially prescriptive about indicators of poor performance. The answer to this question is very much dependent on the shape and length of any future franchise.

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: It would be good to align it with groups of service as there are quite different operating problems in different parts of Scotland and quite different user expectations of different service groups.

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: Unlike some unrealistic press commentators, I do not object to the recent slight additions to journey times (in other franchises other than Scotrail) in order to allow a more consistent punctual running. However this must be kept to only a few minutes and only be done where there is a real need as speed should be one of the advantages of rail. I do find that the removal of the Inverkeithing stop from most daytime Edinburgh to Aberdeen services in order to save very few minutes overall has been a retrograde step.

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: Would not an ideal Scotrail franchise be responsible for most aspects of service delivery in which case the answer is yes. Or are you considering the delays attributable to Network Rail as part of this, for which

the franchisee cannot be held responsible – unless a new pattern of vertical integration gives them more responsibility for this.

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

Q14 comments: Probably not very relevant to most internal Scottish services but see my later comments about optimising the advantages of rail on really long distance services such as Anglo-Scottish ones.

### **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: In all seriousness it is not realistic to expect that all passengers on commuter services will have seats at all times because of the high capital cost of extra carriages that would be grossly underused. However the constant pressure from the local press in south Fife gives the impression of dreadful overcrowding. That simply has not been my experience but that may simply be the particular rush hour trains on which I travel. The use of locomotive hauled trains made up of former main-line carriages on two rush-hour services to/from Fife, although induced by shortage of diesel sets, has been excellent. I find these roomy and comfortable and not full. However the existing Fife-Edinburgh timetable does not make the best use of this. Leaving Dunfermline at 0802 and 0807, only 5 minutes apart, when there has not been a train since 0720 is odd. The service is very irregular interval in the M-F morning rush hour from Dunfermline. This has arisen gradually over many years, possibly for good reason, but I wonder if spreading the departures more evenly could reduce overcrowding on just some of them. If standing for 10 minutes then personally I would say up to 20 minutes is acceptable – i.e. Haymarket-Inverkeithing journey time at which point standing usually becomes unnecessary on Fife services. Also I notice there is a tendency for many commuters to crowd into the front of a train which is already standing while there may still be empty seats at the rear of the train.

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: Except on very frequent urban networks, such as Glasgow, this is not acceptable – see also my later comments on Anglo-Scottish services north of Edinburgh.

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: Up to a point. There is a social need to retain, for example evening and Sunday services on some routes, but there is room for a little more flexibility in allowing franchisees to vary timetables.

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: to encourage greater use of rail to reduce road and air use or at least inhibit the rate of increase of road use. The existing pattern of very low advance fares and higher walk on fares is good but not well understood by all potential passengers. We have to bear in mind that fares are a little lower in Scotland and the state subsidy greater than in the rest of GB, though press comment suggests that passengers do not realise this. There is probably therefore little room for manoeuvre with any greater fare reduction.

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: Scotland has, as in many other aspects of life, a more social approach to matters than in England. Scotland has a generally better public transport situation than England except for Greater London and some urban areas such as Merseyside and West Midlands, where the former PTEs encouraged the development of good, cheap road and rail transport. I would

not favour changing this system by increasing any fares too rapidly.

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 might be room for experiment here. The peak is very concentrated in Glasgow and` Edinburgh. Elsewhere in the country this is a non-starter.

## Scottish stations

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

Q24 comments: Scotland has a good network. I would not generally favour closures. Admittedly the least used stations are on the West Highland and Far North lines but there is no harm in serving these with trains that run anyway. The idea of closing stations simply because they are within one mile of other stations is a nonsense, especially considering that some such stations that have been proposed are recent re-openings. In a dense urban area stations will be within short distances but may offer different journey opportunities.

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: In Scotland the tendency has been to centralise with Transport Scotland becoming responsible for everything. Down south this is less so with local authorities having some financial input to their services. On some lightly used lines Community Rail Partnerships have been successful in getting local support for various aspects of the service including station manning, multiple use of station premises, station refurbishment, local promotion etc. This could be tried in more rural areas of Scotland. The approach by Merseytravel of having M to Go shops at their main suburban service stations, e.g. Southport, Liverpool Central, where the booking office is a colourful and welcoming, well-staffed general shop (but not complex main line booking offices such as Liverpool Lime Street) is successful. However that may be so because a relatively smaller proportion of passengers buy walk-on fares because of the variety of alternative fares – particularly the multi-modal Merseytravel Saveaway fares. These are such good value that I wonder how much they have to be subsidised.

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: As suggested above explore Community Rail Partnerships.

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

Q28 comments: Generally speaking I think Scotland already has a good

quality station stock. It is not realistic to suggest that more stations should be fully staffed.

### **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: Absolutely they must continue to do so. To see Scotland's rail services as merely contained within the Scottish Borders is myopic. There is much traffic over the border and it does not all originate at Edinburgh or Glasgow. Dundee, Inverness and Aberdeen are sufficiently important for business and the tourist trade to have through services. Firstly cross border services are there for the longer distance traveller but they do also carry substantial internal traffic where the Scotrail services could not cope and where a higher standard of comfort and service is wanted. To some extent it requires an element of specification from government because long distance inter city companies wanting to maximise profit may want to get rid of these services which may be less convenient to run, e.g. suggestions in the last year from Mrs Holt of East Coast. Probably this should be a matter of agreement between DfT and SG.

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: This is a disastrous idea. People do appreciate through services. We are only talking about a few trains but this few is important. The onward connections are cramped services which are a disincentive to long distance travel. We need to try harder to get a shift from air. Edinburgh already is a hub for many towns so to ask this is a red herring to cover the removal just a few important services which substantially improve Scottish public transport. Please understand I am not criticising Scotrail which is an above average operator but to suggest that they should supply everything is myopic.

## **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: We need to explore the advantages of rail. The re-tenderings down south of the last few years have generally resulted in declining service quality on inter city services in order to make franchises more competitive. While the bulk of passengers may want simple standard class accommodation, maximising the transfer of passengers from air may need a resurrection of better first-class services and better dining facilities as well as introducing business facilities as found on the continent. This is of limited appeal for internal Scottish services – rather it applies to long-distance cross border services. But there may be some scope with selected Edinburg/Glasgow to Aberdeen/Inverness services.

## **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: Along with improving inter-city services in 32 above this should be part of the offering on longer distance internal services.

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: If first class is viable then it should be developed as part of encouraging less use of road and air by those that do not conventionally use rail. But this needs much more imaginative marketing than we have so far seen. I do not refer just to advertising but to the constant failure of the Association of Train Operating Companies to aggressively and convincingly counter adverse and misleading anti-rail press and news reports.

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

Q35 comments: Generally we must beware of being an over prescriptive society. There is good reason to ban alcohol consumption on trains being used by large numbers of football fans as at present. But there is no reason at all to penalise many socially responsible travellers by further restrictions.



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

Q36 comments: It is generally very good. The Live Destination Boards on the National Rail Website have failed to give the true picture during the very severe service interruptions in the last 14 months owing to bad weather. Trains which have been cancelled are still shown as due to run but not having departed. Scotrail have done a good job of putting changes on their website but the wording could be clearer. For example saying that services to Cowdenbeath from Edinburgh are withdrawn does not make clear that services going further than Cowdenbeath are still operating. It is a simple matter of someone writing what is put on the site in a very explanatory mode from the passengers' point of view rather than writing in shorthand that will be more likely understood by railway staff.

### **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 service must continue and should be specified.

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: This is a matter for the most expedient way of doing it. I am satisfied with Scotrail doing it.

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: This service needs much better marketing. The mix of fares and the levels is about right. This is an important service in persuading air passengers to use the more environmentally-friendly rail. Top meetings in London, out by sleeper and back by late daytime train is more relaxing than catching the first flight of the day. Also a considerably early start is needed by rail for a day trip, which is only marginally better than the early start for the

first planes. I cannot comment on services north of the central belt but Glasgow and Edinburgh should continue to be served.. If facilities were to be improved, as for example with the possible new rolling stock, a small increase in fares might be allowable. But in the main it is much more dynamic publicity that is needed. The sleeper is convenient, more relaxing and good value. This should be shouted from the rooftops. I am amazed at how many colleagues who are wedded to automatic air travel for everything are completely ignorant about both sleeper and daytime intercity travel in terms of services, run, speed and fares.

### **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: