

# **CONSULTATION ON INITIATIVES RELATED TO THE SCOTRAIL FRANCHISE EXTENSION**

**Name: Des McNulty MSP**

**Position: Transport Spokesperson, Scottish Labour Party**

## **Introduction:**

**FirstScotrail will receive £2.5 billion Government subsidy over the 10 year franchise term. In that context there should have been a full consultation with all stakeholders over the extension of the franchise. In practice, all the key decisions in relation to the enhancements set out in the priced options were determined at the time the franchise extension was approved. In that context this consultation is a sop rather than a substantive exercise.**

## **COMPLETE LIST OF CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

### **Core Services**

**Q1 Which of the Priced Options do you think best support the delivery of *Scotland's Railways*?**

**This is a question that would have been more appropriate to ask leading up to the agreement of the franchise extension, rather than being asked at a time when the main contractual requirements on FirstScotrail and on Transport Scotland have already been put in place.**

**Had an earlier consultation been carried out as Audit Scotland, the Labour Party and the vast majority of stakeholders had suggested, then a third option of reducing passenger fares could have been considered. I believe that the option of reducing passenger fares remains the optimum approach to secure modal shift and other key transport and climate change priorities. Although fares reductions is not included in the priced options I continue to hold the view that this approach would be the most consistent with the transport and climate change priorities set out by the Scottish Government.**

**The Government claims it has secured £73.1 million investment from FirstScotrail. This income is conditional on revenue income and is not guaranteed as suggested by the Minister. The Audit Scotland report moreover states that Ministers could decide to use all or part of this money to reduce the Government subsidy rather than improve services. I would strongly oppose any removal of resources from transport through a reduction of the amount allocated by Government in support of rail travel. It is my view that resources**

should be earmarked for investment in service improvements or improvements in the travel experience that will address the priority areas set out in *Scotland's Railways*.

It is not clear to what extent any of the priced options are additional to what was already committed to by Government when *Scotland's Railways* was published and the *Route Utilisation Strategy* and *High Level Output Specification* were endorsed. It is difficult to comment on service enhancement already agreed – the timing of the consultation should have such as to allow comment to be made when enhancements were still the subject of discussion and before contractual agreement was sought. In the context of the current economic situation I believe there needs to be more flexibility in the priced options to take account of changes in travel patterns e.g. through altered travel to work or leisure travel volumes.

Q2 Is our schedule for new service introduction right?

It is not clear whether the amount cited - £73.1 million – which is conditional on revenue income - can be spent over the whole remaining period of the franchise or whether it is likely to be available only in the 2011-14 period. It would be helpful to get clarification in this regard. Without that clarification it is difficult to comment on the appropriateness or otherwise of the schedule for new service introduction.

Q3 Which future Priced Options would you wish to see Transport Scotland develop?

In terms of future priced options there is no indication of forward thinking might have given this consultation greater value. Of the options cited I would give priority to the improvements to the Edinburgh Glasgow journey time given the contribution this might make to modal shift. Consideration should be given to bringing this scheme forward in the context of extra capital funds being made available following the Pre-Budget Review.

Q4 Where should we concentrate our efforts on improving services, in particular journey times?

**Enhancements to the Edinburgh Glasgow journey time through the introduction of a revised timetable and electrification of services**

Connecting to Passengers and People

Q5 How can buying a ticket be made easier?

- More 'over-the-counter' services

- More 'ticket vending machines'
- 'Customer service' staff to offer assistance and advice when buying a ticket
- Internet purchase facilities
- Telesales
- Through mobile phones
- Smart cards.

**I am in favour of more ticket vending machines, but these should be complementary to a visible staff presence at stations and the maintenance of over-the-counter services. I believe there are safety, as well as efficiency reasons for maintaining existing staff levels. Staff services remain a vital component in the quality of the passenger experience.**

Q6 To make the best use of available space at stations, how should we balance the use between commercial outlets and other facilities that offer further passenger benefits? Please consider:

- The size of station based on passenger numbers and demand
- Type of facilities (e.g. food outlets, news-stands, pharmacies, etc.)
- Community-based initiatives supported by the Stations

**I believe all new stations should have, as a necessary requirement, shelter for passengers and that larger stations, both in city and town centres and on commuter routes, should have secure cycle storage facilities to ensure easier integration between active travel and rail travel.**

**I support a range of facilities such as news stands, food outlets etc at larger stations and I believe that community organisations should be encouraged to link or provide their services alongside rail travel where circumstances permit.**

Community Regeneration Fund.

Q7 How could the station environment be improved? Please consider:

- Lighting
- Availability of seating / furniture
- Safety (e.g. through technology such as CCTV, 'Help-Points')
- A visible staff presence.
- **Provision of warm waiting areas**
- **better signage (not just in train stations but also in the vicinity of stations)**
- **free and clean toilets and appropriate security - not just CCTV –**
- **maintaining a visible staff presence at stations.**

Q8 How could signage be improved at stations?

- Direction~ within stations to ticket office, platforms, toilets, etc.
- Directions to facilities nearby, e.g. hospitals.

**One key problem is that responsibility for signage is fragmented between the train operator, Network Rail, Regional Transport Partnerships and local authorities. This fragmentation means that signage is much poorer now than it used to be and is very much poorer than signage arrangements on for example the London Underground and on stations in other European countries.**

**I believe that signage to ticket offices, to platforms, to toilets and directions to nearby facilities such as hospitals could be greatly improved.**

Q9 How can we improve assisted travel at stations? In particular, please consider:

- Station access (such as wheelchair ramps, facilities for light scooters, facilities for passengers with assistance dogs)
- Assistance for people with hearing or learning difficulties
- Increased training for existing staff
- The availability of dedicated staff.

**While I appreciate that there have been improvements in disabled access at some stations and some services, there remain very many stations in Scotland that remain inaccessible for disabled people and wheelchair users, and not very accessible for those with impaired mobility.**

**Significant investment is required to secure necessary improvements and signage which would assist wheelchair users - in particular to find where to board the train. It would have been far more sensible to spend money on this than on new livery for First Scotrail trains.**

Q10 Do you have any ideas for further 'RailLinks'? Please consider the accessibility of:

- Hospitals
- Bus station interchange
- Car parking
- Park and Ride
- Traveline
- Walking routes.

**There are a variety of places in Scotland where new rail links would be desirable, such as Dalmeir to the Jubilee Hospital in Clydebank; Haymarket to Murrayfield; Queen Margaret University/Musselburgh /Newcraighall; and Scrabster and Gills Bay to Thurso.**

Q11 Which pilot scheme changes to fares should we make to encourage modal shift? Please consider:

- Reduced fares for (disabled passengers, families, students, low income groups, ex-servicemen)
- Reduced fares at targeted times of day / year
- Annual season tickets
- . Geographical tickets, Le. tickets for a particular region
- Other rail cards.

**I believe that fare increases, particularly on regulated routes, of 6% (which is significantly in excess of inflation at the present time), represents a significant disincentive to a modal shift to rail. In that context, my preference would be for a general reduction in fare levels which I believe should have been the central priority for any franchise extension.**

**Consideration should be given to the introduction of a Scottish railcard for older people and those with disabilities, which would provide reduced fares for these groups. Consideration could also be given to an improved young people's railcard for which students in higher education would be eligible. I would also favour consideration being given to extending the National Concessionary Travel scheme to include rail travel, perhaps initially on a pilot basis for those travelling on lines to the North of Inverness as suggested by Railfuture Scotland.**

The Future: looking forward

Q12 When travelling on the train, how could passengers' experiences be improved? In particular, please consider:

- The balance between the provision of seating (including tables) and the availability of storage space (for luggage, cycles etc.)
- (Up-to-date) information
- Helpfulness of staff
- Catering

**More resources put in to staff training as a requirement; better information about the impact of weather conditions on mainline services to be made available, not just at main services but suburban feeder stations; improved standards of cleanliness in train toilets and greater availability of toilets and washing facilities on trains and at stations.**

Q13 Where should we concentrate our efforts in improving the Anglo-Scottish sleeper services? In particular please consider:

- The number of locations served
- Facilities on trains or at stations
- Arrival and departure times
- The provision of airline-style overnight seats II
- Catering
- Staffing

**Making the sleepers more price competitive with air travel. Provision of free shower facilities for all passengers, not just those with first class tickets. Addressing customer service issues, such as when passengers are asked to vacate sleeper trains and greater flexibility in when breakfast is available.**

*Q14* How could we improve the travel interchange at stations? Please consider this in terms of:

- Ticketing
- Service connections
- Infrastructure (waiting rooms)
- Facilities for cyclists (cycle racks, National Cycle Route interchange signage)
- Car parking
- Walking routes
- Accessibility for disabled passengers.

**Making sure that bus information is available throughout the interchange, particularly information about imminent departures and arrivals - especially at rail stations adjacent to bus stations or ferry ports.**

**Having integrated accessibility arrangements for disabled or mobility impaired passengers providing shelters and covered ways throughout rail, ferry and bus interchanges.**

**Greater clarification needed over where responsibility of integrating services rests between organisations.**

**Encouraging provision of secure cycle parking and car parking facilities and, where appropriate, walking routes to ensure integration between car and rail travel and rail and active travel.**

*Q15* What should our communications connectivity priorities be?

**Up to date information about delays and expected arrival and departure times for long distance and medium distance commuter services.**

*Q16* Would wireless internet technology significantly benefit passengers? Please comment on:

- For leisure use
- For business use
- Short 'commuter' journeys
- Longer distance journeys.

**I believe it would benefit all rail users on all long distance services and commuter medium distance services.**

*Q17* Would you pay for this service?

**No.**

*Q18* Where should the Edinburgh-Glasgow SmartCard pilot project take us?  
Please consider:

- the outcomes which would determine whether the pilot was successful.

**It is difficult to understand why this question is being asked in this consultation. Surely whether the outcomes that would determine whether or not the pilot project was successful should have been identified before the pilot project was commenced.**

*Q19* How best can we focus the franchisee on the options for delivering better sustainability?

**I believe electrification, particularly the Glasgow-Edinburgh route, but potentially more routes in Scotland, is the single most important factor in improving sustainability of rail services and I strongly support the route towards more electrified services.**

**In line with my comments to previous questions I believe that increases in rail fares act as a barrier to modal shift and that reduction in rail fares would help deliver greater sustainability in terms of transport and would also help the Scottish Government achieve climate change targets.**

*Q20* How should the Environmental Improvement Works budget be used to further improve our carbon footprint on the railways? Please consider:

- Electrification
- Waste recycling
- Time switch lighting
- 'eco' driving training
- LED light installation
- non-traction energy improvements
- Other.

**In answer to the previous question I highlighted electrification as an important lever to greater sustainability but it is hardly a low budget element, and it is therefore difficult to see how it would be delivered through the environmental improvement works budget. I would favour LED light installation and waste recycling for rubbish on trains including (free) newspapers.**

*Q21* What should we consider in station and community regeneration?

Please think about:

- The size of station
- Facilities which reflect the needs of each community.

**The Scottish Government should think about providing stations in a town or locality where there is a concentration of communities that fall under the the bottom 15% of the deprivation index.**

**Priority should also be given to the number of passengers using the station, not the size of the station. There should also be some recognition of safety considerations as measured by crime figures and the perceived threat of crime.**

Q22 Where should we concentrate our efforts on the Station Community Regeneration Fund?

**The Scottish Government should concentrate on stations where they can improve not just rail travel but bus travel i.e. bus-rail interchanges.**

**It should also concentrate on stations where there are particular problems with accessibility or community safety.**

Q23 What additional services or projects in furtherance of the Commonwealth Games Bid commitments do you feel would most benefit the city during the Games period?

**The Glasgow Crossrail, or those parts of the Glasgow Crossrail that would most improve access to the Commonwealth Games sites, and also access from other parts of Scotland to and through Glasgow should be identified and prioritised.**

**It would be helpful in this context to know what the Government's Commonwealth bid commitments are.**

Q24 What aspects of the Project Manager's role are priorities to ensure the successful delivery of the projects?

- **Identification and monitoring of funding requirements.**
- **Monitoring of the performance of the franchisee in delivering the projects.**
- **The management of risk.**
- **The communication to members of the public and Parliament of progress - or the lack of it.**



Q25 Do you think that any of the improvements and enhancements proposed above will have either a positive or adverse impact on equality groups in terms of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- LGBT
- Race
- Religion and belief?

Please give reasons for your answer.

**The most obvious positive impact is on wheelchair users and those with impaired mobility with access improvements. I believe that the introduction of a Scottish railcard and on an improved youth railcard would deliver significant benefits to these sections of the community.**