

Respondent Information Form and Questions

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

Title Mr Ms Mrs Miss Dr *Please tick as appropriate*

Surname

Yuill

Forename

Kate

2. Postal Address

Greenhole Place

Bridge of Don

Aberdeen

Postcode AB23 8EU

Phone 01224343913

Email

3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

/ Group/Organisation

Please tick as appropriate

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis
Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate

No



Rail 2014 – Public Consultation

Following is a submission from Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce to the 2014 Rail Consultation.

As a member of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce (SCC), we have already provided input to and fully support the SCC consultation response which has also been submitted. We have also fed our views into three Transport Scotland-led consultation exercises in Aberdeen and Glasgow.

Over and above this, there are a number of points our members would particularly like us to draw attention to on their behalf.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce is North-east Scotland's leading membership organisation. We represent approximately 1200 business members, ranging from sole traders to major multi nationals, across all sectors of industry. Between them they employ around 90,000 people in the private sector.

Aberdeen itself is home to a global oil and gas industry which is a major contributor to the Scottish and UK economies contributing £226 million in business rates each year and more than £6billion in oil and gas exports.

The region is also a significant contributor to Scotland's food and drink industry, accounting for almost one-third of Scotland's food exports and the production of 14% of Scotland's food and drink.

We have a significant tourism industry which employs 20,000 people in the region and which is on track to grow substantially in the coming years.

The area is absolutely reliant on good connectivity with the rest of the country to ensure that our region's economy – which contributes so much to the national Scottish and UK economies - can continue to flourish and grow. A modern, effective, efficient rail system is an integral part of that.

We strongly believe that the overriding ambition of Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government should be to deliver the best possible rail service for the whole of Scotland and that the refranchising should not be seen as a cost-cutting opportunity which will result in a considerable reduction of service to many parts of the country. We would like to see a statement of intent confirming that included in the Minister's ambition statement. We believe this is necessary because two discussion points raised in the consultation are of particular concern as we do not believe that they truly represent an ambition to provide the best possible rail service for the whole country.

Cross Border Services

We are strongly opposed to the suggestion that through services between London and Aberdeen be discontinued. The suggestion that this be replaced by an Edinburgh hub and that all passengers travelling onwards north of Edinburgh would have to change trains is completely unacceptable and would be a major step backwards in the provision of a national rail service.

This matter was previously raised with the UK Government, with support from then Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson, and the UK Government accepted the case for the continuation of through trains. It is therefore extremely disappointing that Transport Scotland should reintroduce the subject little more than a year later.

Its implementation would have serious implications for our region's economic and tourism potential by severely restricting travelling choices to destinations north of Edinburgh, sending out a negative message implying that business and tourism interests are focused on Scotland's central belt and that the rest of the country does not merit ease of connectivity with the rest of the UK.

Additionally this would greatly inconvenience passengers using this service at a time when franchise considerations should focus on providing an improved passenger experience not one which is more detrimental.

Caledonian Sleeper

Maintaining an overnight Sleeper service between Aberdeen and London must remain a priority. It is an important link between North and North-east Scotland and the UK capital, which provides an essential alternative to air travel allowing business passengers to arrive in the city for a 9am start for a full day of meetings. We recognise that there is a need to invest in improvements to the rolling stock and welcome the £100million investment commitment by the Scottish and UK governments. Our understanding is that use of the sleeper service is on the increase and improved facilities are likely to encourage even greater use of the service.

Passenger convenience and comfort

Passengers travelling on the ScotRail lines to Glasgow and Edinburgh are frequently poorly served by the current level of service provision. Setting the criteria for a good service provision for passengers should be an integral and important part of the franchise agreement and should not be an area for compromise. While consideration might be given to incentivising exceptional performance, it should not be a feature in simply meeting required standards. Poor performance which does not meet the criteria or the required standards should be penalised. Significant improvements to passenger service must be built into the new franchise.

Issues experienced by passengers to and from Aberdeen include:

- No onboard catering facilities on early morning trains – compounded by the fact that neither the cafeteria at Aberdeen Railway Station or the First Class Lounge open before 7.30am
- Early train cancelled because the guard failed to turn up for work
- On board service - Lack of luggage facilities, poor provision of on board catering, no WiFi facility, cleanliness of toilets, out of order toilets, overcrowding
- Severe overcrowding on trains travelling from Edinburgh/Glasgow to Aberdeen during major sporting/entertainment event; trains too small; booked and reserved seating arrangements not honoured; toilet and catering facilities inaccessible or inadequate

First class service

- Business passengers often choose to pay a premium fare to maximise use of travelling time by working during the journey. However the benefits of this compared to the higher fare they pay are minimal. There is very limited room for working, no WiFi provision, extremely limited luggage provision and poor on board catering.



Registered in Scotland as a company limited by Guarantee.
Registration number SC0 000 731. Registered Office: Greenhole Place, Aberdeen, Scotland AB23 8EU. VAT Number 265 3165 59.

