# Respondent Information Form and Questions

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

## 1. Name/Organisation

**Organisation Name**

| SERA SCOTLAND |
| --- |

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

**Surname**

| SCOTT |
| --- |

**Forename**

| MARY |
| --- |

## 2. Postal Address

| 1A Abbotsford Lane |
| --- |
| Aberdeen |
| |
| |

| **Postcode** AB11 7SW | **Tel 01224 592595** | Mary.Scott@phonecoop.coop |
| --- | --- | --- |

## 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*  X ☐ 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*  X ☐ Yes ☐ No

## 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: The franchise should not be split up. All "economic" routes have other services. A dual focus would result in downgrading both the "economic" and the "non-economic" services. In the rest of the UK any "dual focus" franchise appear to being abandoned to achieve better cost effeciency.

2. What should be the length of the contract for future franchises, and what factors lead you to this view?

Q2 comments: Because of current economic and political uncertainties the franchise length should be the shortest practical period which appears to be seven years.

3. What risk support mechanism should be reflected within the franchise?

Q3 comments: External risk should be accepted by Government. Private business will not accept risk except at very high premium.

4. What, if any, profit share mechanism should apply within the franchise?

Q4 comments: There would be political unrest if very high profits were made and lost to the railway service. In practice and with regulation of fares profits could be the "incentive" for good service.

5. Under what terms should third parties be involved in the operation of passenger rail services?

Q5 comments: Additional services could be provided by third parties where they increase rather than abstract from the level of train service especially if the franchisee is unwilling to introduce new services. The Jacobite steam service provides an influx of employment and tourist business to the Highlands.

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

Q6 comments: Financial penalties or, ultimately, revocation of the franchise if outcome measures are not met. The incentive for meeting the measures

should be the additional passenger income.

7. What level of performance bond and/or parent company guarantees are appropriate?

Q7 comments: Sufficient to cover the cost of re-letting the franchise in case of franchise failure to be a bond from a parent company. Very high bonds would result in higher bid prices.

8. What sanctions should be used to ensure the franchisee fulfils its franchise commitments?

Q8 comments: As in Q6 and Q7. The previous record of franchise bidders and their parent companies in this respect should be a condition of franchising.

## Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments: Good performamce should result in its own financial incentive. However, If the system set up to penalise poor performance can also be used to reward good performance over and above the expected level then it should be considered.

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: As in Q1, the whole of Scotland

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

Q11 comments: Some aspects of the performance regime (SQUIRE) are a disadvantage and inconvenience to passengers. This is particularly in the way ticket barriers, ticket vending machines, collection of tickets, poorly detailed receipts, lack of holding train connections and treatment of passengers is enforced. In other words a much more understanding and welcoming attitude to fare paying passengers is required. This includes giving appropriate staff more discretion rather than using SQUIRE to discipline staff for helping passengers.

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

Q12 comments: Refers to recovery times and allowed delay times? Difficult when the organisations who know about train scheduling are then "incentivised/penalised" for poor performance on the very schedules they

have set. Transport Scotland needs the expertise to intervene on recovery times. However, there seems not to be a significant issue in Scotland compared to rest of UK. Although the present system is not pefect there must be a practical limit of how every stop and every minute can be monitored and penalised if necessary. Even on the present systems the number of trains arriving "on time" is not very good even if comparable with the rest of the UK.

If this refers to journey time reduction then this must not be at the expense of intrermediate stops. In general journey time is probably not as much a priority for most passengers as is sometimes claimed. A few routes have, for historical reasons, inadequate infrastructure which does render journey times hopelessly uncompetitive.

13. Is a Service Quality Incentive Regime (SQUIRE) required? And if so should it cover all aspects of stations and service delivery, or just those being managed through the franchise?

Q13 comments: Answered in Q11: Some aspects of the performance regime are a disadvantage and inconvenience to passengers. This is particularly in the way ticket barriers, ticket vending machines, collection of tickets, poorly detailed receipts, lack of holding train connections and treatment of passengers is enforced. In other words a much more understanding and welcoming attitude to fare paying passengers is required. It would be more difficult to extend the regime to other non-franchised parts of the network where other supervision is in place. With devolved Network Rail management structure an experimental voluntary system could be intoruduced.

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

Q14 comments: Listen to train users and their representatives. Do not dismiss their views out of hand.

**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: Do not extend standing time. Where would it stop? There are very few short commuting services. The text mentions some unacceptably long standing times which are well beyond 10 minutes. There is an issue with short train formations, especially at weekends when there is no shortage of train units.

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: Interchange should be used to introduce new services. Existing through services should not be cut into smaller sections. The present system where almost all train rosters cover relatively long distances has been built up through the years and provides better cost efficiency than many short train workings.

Interchange requires connections to be held or some equivalent. In particular, bus connections cannot be integrated without more bus regulation. It is disgraceful that Scottish Government has broken promises to re-regulate bus services. Without re-regulation wrecking operations by individual bus operators would destroy any integration.

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: Experience is that Government should specify minimum and maximum frequencies and first and last trains. Franchisees tend to drop off progressively first and last trains and concentrate higher frequencies on the most popular routes, squeezing out other essential services.

18. What level of contract specification should we use the for the next ScotRail franchise?

Q18 comments: Full or targetted high specification.

19. How should the contract incentivise the franchisee to be innovative in the provision of services?

Q19 comments: Where franchisee innovation is beneficial to train users then the franchisee should not be penalised. Innovations are not necessarily in the best interests of train users.

**Scottish rail fares**

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

Q20 comments: 1. to allow people to travel without having to buy a car. 2. To make use of spare off-peak capacity by low off-peak fares. Within these limits fares should be as simple as possible. On Scottish day time trains advance booking must not be a pre-requisite of affordable fares. Trains are not, and should not be, only for the wealthy or those able to book ahead.

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: All fares except first class fares should be regulated. Otherwise Scotland will not get the benefit of its financial support for train services.

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: Fares should be "increased" at inflation less 1% as promised at the time of privatisation. Taxpayer subsidy will be reduced with further cost efficiencies as Network Rail recovers from the high cost of safety and reliability improvements essential after the serious mistakes of privatisation and the former Railtrack regime and also with economies of scale with increasing demand for train services. Taxpayer subsidy should not be considered without comparisons to other modes of tranport, for example the massive taxpayer subsidy for the additional Forth Road Bridge or that to road haulage. Train users should not have to pay higher fares for routes which have just been brought up to reasonable standard. The term "enhanced" is not understood in this context.

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: Very few people can switch their time of travel. Low off peak fares will encourage train use rather than other transport modes. Present ratios between peak and off-peak have probably been set by operators trying to get maximum yield rather than maximum benefit. However, ratios must be in the order of 50% on most routes. There must be action to introduce off-peak single fares. The present system where all single fares are peak is counter-productive.

**Scottish stations**

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

Q24 comments: Stations should be considered for closure or opening on their individual merits, not on discredited formulae or rules of thumb. Very, very few stations should even be considered for closure. The list of poorly used stations published elsewhere is poorly presented and with little confidence in the recording of passenger numbers, whether they are request stops or not and the reasons why most of them have very, very low numbers of trains

stopping. The proposal that existing stations within one mile of another station is not accepted. Perhaps there should be a practice of having a station at least every five miles? There are still, after the Beeching closures, far, far too many communities too far away from the nearest railway station. Southern Scotland and North-East Scotland are the most obvious areas. In some areas it is a case of re-opening stations on existing lines, perhaps with some "innovative" thinking, in others new lines would be required. SERA does support the re-opening proposals of the early period of the Scottish Parliament and believes it should continue. Incredibly there are some existing stations with unnecessary very, very poor levels of service. In general, stations should be located within walking distance of the communities they serve and not inconveniently on the outskirts. That is they should be part of the community. Bus, cycle and pedestrian access is important and should not be compromised by either the prioritisation of car parks (eg as at Armadale) or the "Ring of Steel" approach (eg as at Motherwell). In making stations harder to get into then full risk assessment should be clear in terms of safety and emergency exit (eg as at Queen Street Low Level).

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: 1. Third Party – Local Authority. Local authorities have a much better record of locating new stations than, say, non-democratic organisations such as Tranport Scotland. In fact, most improvements of the network have been initiated by local authorities although Transport Scotland and similar partners have been essential in realising these improvements. Local Authorities should propose, promote and protect station sites although the same local authorities now have no funding to re-open these stations. Transport Scotland should withdraw the threats made to Local Authorities (or RTP's) that they should not to propose station sites in their local or strategic plans.

2. Third Party – Private business. While these third parties should be encouraged to promote and fund stations the actual funding provided is often minimal and can result in extremely poor location as at Blackridge station. Prestwick International Airport overcame institutional resistance to build a station which, so far, has been an asset to the Ayrshire economy. Most businesses, including Scotland's other two main airports, have been clear in prioritising not rail access but motorway access and very much at taxpayers' expense.

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: The present system is the best compromise. Network Rail, as

a long-term partner, responsible for infrastructure and safety and the franchisee, as a short term partner, responsible for the attractiveness, information and provision of any staff (except at the very largest of our stations).

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

Q27 comments: Railway industry partners should listen to local communities. Some good work has been done more recently but local community involvement has often been dismissed in the past.

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

Q28 comments: All stations should be considered on their individual merits. The point is well made that some stations are interchange points requiring more facilities than their ticket sales would suggest. On the other hand the extensive Scottish rail network would be unaffordable if all stations had to be staffed. Most stations are now appropriately provided for and some imposed high standards are making stations too expensive to re-open.

Further de-staffing of stations or transfer of staff duties to non-railway interests would be counter-productive for passengers and the service.

CCTV, once considered impractical, should be extended to as many stations as possible. Without them stations can become "playgrounds" for young people.

Some interchange stations do not have good cover from the weather, e.g. Partick, is it not possible to have platform canopies?

While rails for bikes are at most stations most cyclists do not like leaving bikes out in the rain all day. Some stations have cover for bikes, some don't.

**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. Passengers and will be lost and benefits to Scotland will be lost if long distance (e.g London to Aberdeen) services are terminated at Edinburgh. It seems unlikely that ScotRail could provide sufficient rolling stock of sufficient quality to replace these trains, especially as some run at peak times in Scotland. They should remain primarily a DfT responsibility.

The consultation text seems to consider the cross-border services and the ORCATS system are financially detrimental to Scotland. In this case Transport Scotland should use "ORCATS" to re-introduce ScotRail services on the East and West Coast Main Lines to a suitable "Hub" which would probably be across the border in Carlisle and Newcastle (or Berwick).

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: Answer as Q29. Edinburgh is a hub but some through long distance trains are an economic advantage to Scotland. Is it seriously considered that the ScotRail franchise could procure such good quality trains? That would be innovation.

## Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments:Sufficient good quality flexible trains are required. Scottish Government has effectively been the provider of trains and has been better at this than the private sector acting on its own initiative, an obvious failuire of privatisation. It is inevitable that trains, within their working lives, are going to be moved round different parts of Scotland. More standardised but adaptable trains are needed rather than a different design for every new train order. It is a pity that the most recent order is of a different type and apparently not even suitable for all electrified routes. It would be most innovative if Transport Scotland should consider good quality trains more suitable for forming longer trains than the present fixed formations which cannot easily match passenger demand. Given ongoing electrification it may be possible to have trains suitable for both electric and diesel traction.

32. What facilities should be present on a train and to what extent should these facilities vary according to the route served?

Q32 comments:

The quality of Scottish trains has been improving and is already better than the West Coast Main Line long distance trains.

There are few short distance commuter or true branch line services in Scotland. It seems difficult to justify specialised train designs for these few services.

Toilets on trains are now considered essential, even a good selling point, especially as most stations do not have toilets for passengers. They must be reliable which appears to mean at least two toilets per train. Keeping toilets working is a priority requirement.

Seats must align with windows.  Most passengers expect a window seat, not a blank wall. Not aligning seats with windows is treating passengers with contempt. Passengers like table seats and fold down mini-tables.

Trains need through corridor connections which must be better for staff as well as passengers.

Space for luggage and bikes is required although recent trains are getting better. To some extent luggage and bike space on longer routes represents

standing space on those few short very overcrowded routes.

Given the various and often long routes in Scotland, including tourist routes and the importance of tourism to the Scottish economy, thought should be given to quieter, vibration free trains with lower floors without undefloor motors and engines, all with good windows.

The consultation commits to having at least two members of staff on every train which is, strictly speaking, an improvement on that inherited from the nationalised railway (Strathclyde Manning Agreement). The important point is the training, grade and qualifications of the staff in the train . Rail unions, employers and Transport Scotland should both be more positive about upgrading new staff and ensuring that such staff are always available so that trains do not have to be cancelled, especially on Monday mornings.

## 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 trains should have facilities pre-installed, the franchisee should operate the systems. These develop rapidly. What is the latest hi-tech now will not be in ten years time.

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: Apart from having said that new train builds will be more cost-

effectively provided by Scottish Government the decisions on first class should be better taken by the franchisee.

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 banning of both consumption and possession of alcohol on football trains (and buses) has been very successful and credit is due to all parties involved. However, banning alcohol across the whole range of other trains would bring much more varied problems and would probably be counterproductive. Separating consumption and possession, as in taking shopping home, would be problematic. Abusive alcohol affected passengers are often dealt with by on-train staff and the staff should be totally supported in these actions.

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

Q36 comments:

There have been very good advances for regular travellers familiar with modern IT methods. Many passengers are not ready for high tech. Therefore:

TV information screens and announcements are good but spoilt by constant interruption by other non-train information, often totally useless.  If these other informations are considered seriously important then a separate information system is needed. Stop spoiling the train information system.

On-train progress information, often semi-automatic, is too often out of synchronisation with the train's progress making it worse than useless.

There is now good old fashioned timetable information at almost all, if not all, stations, most commendable. However, they are nearly always for a whole route often with many trains for very many stations. These should be adapted for individual stations by (colour?) high lighting that individual station's timings.

**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: The sleeper service must be continued to all present destinations. It is the value it brings to Scotland that matters.

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: Although specified in the ScotRail franchise most of the operation is already contracted out and with very little integration into the rest of ScotRail service. Perhaps exploration of an alternative franchise would be productive for passengers, staff and Scotland. Specification must be by Scottish Government, not DfT.

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:

1. Appeal: The appeal is starting business or leisure in London or Scotland at an early hour in the morning having had a reasonable night's rest (as opposed to airports or very early day trains). Alternatively, the appeal is finshing a day's business or leisure quite late on and then getting a nights rest on the sleeper. For some it is saving waking time for other purposes than travelling. The appeal is across a wide range of people and incomes. Some users certainly appear very wealthy. There is no logical reason that users would prefer over-night buses or earlier/later trains. These trains are not that early or late and certainly not for the North of Scotland. Even, eventually, HS2 may not be an alternative as it is planned to be shut down at night for maintenance.

2. The value to more northern destinations is even more important, especially with respect to tourism and relative isolation. Oban does not seem any better for connectivity than Fort William and there could be operational difficulties. However, Oban does need a better train service, including connections into the sleeper.

3. There are, or have been, concerns about information and booking difficulties especially at more minor stations served by the sleeper. It surprises potential customers how often the sleeper is said to be "fully booked".

4. The present facilities follow a long period of improving cost efficiencies just to allow the sleeper service to survive and the present mix is proably the best compromise. Other suggestions are for cheaper "dorm" cars as used in other countries or for much more expensive full en-suite facilities. Such en-suite facilities would be very expensive to

provide but there is every indication that some customers are very willing and able to pay for such facilities. The majority of customers would probably find them too expensive and would prefer the present accommodation or look for alternatives.

5.  The existing trains have been extemely good for their purpose and it is difficult to imagine any more modern trains being nearly as good. Unfortunately spares are becoming difficult to get to maintain the present trains especially as so many of the trains were sold off for scrap at privatisation. All industry partners should consider how to provide a new standard train coach which could form the basis not only of long term replacements of the sleeper trains but also a better train for other longer distance services for Scotland.

6.  The sleeper provides good connections into Eurostar services (which, as it happens, do not run at night).

## 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:


This question appears to be about details of environmental performance, too varied to comment on, and generally covered by overall regulation. These issues can be more difficult in a transport situation, for example many large stations are still prohibited from having "waste" bins on security grounds.


Far more important from an environmental aspect is transport mode change to more environmentally friendly means. As in the Network Rail IIP quoting from government statistics standard rail travel has better carbon reduction performance than almost all competing means, including bus and  "light rail".


The priority is transfer from less environmentally friendy transport modes to rail and although this consultation is essentially about the ScotRail passenger franchise the biggest issue is that of transferring freight form road to other transport modes. Road haulage is highly subsidised and it is unfortunate to see Scottish Government's massive road building programme at no cost to road hauliers when even the new free-to-use Forth Road Bridge is justified on the fact that the original bridge was not designed for today's heavier lorries. The UK Government is even more culpable in subsidising road haulage, recently agreeing longer lorries, probably about to give way on even heavier lorries and in allowing foreign and Irish road hauliers to use UK roads for free.