

railfuture SCOTTISH BRANCH NOTES

No 56: Nov 2003

Autumn Meeting

There are a number of major projects in discussion for the railways around Edinburgh. The two largest are the modernisation of Waverley station and the airport link. Our belated autumn meeting gives you a chance to get away from the Christmas shopping and discuss something more interesting, these two projects.

Airport Link

The airport link involves building a tunnel under the runway, with a station in a cutting by the terminal building. It cannot be in a tunnel because of the lack of electrification. Is this the best use for the money, or would it be better to build an interchange station at Gogar from which people could get to the airport by tram? Passengers from the west will be able to change at Edinburgh Park for the tram to the airport. On the other hand a proper airport link provides the potential for replacement of many internal air services by rail services, with lower greenhouse gas emissions. Does Edinburgh airport have enough passengers for a link to be worthwhile? Should more be encouraged? These are difficult questions and Colin Howden from *TRANSform Scotland* will give us much food for thought in his presentation.

Waverley

Modernising Waverley is vital, but has been mired in problems. What is the ideal station? What do the heritage lobby think about changing/knocking down what is a Grade 1 Listed Building? I was surprised to hear that they do not consider the booking office is something that should stand in the way of a rebuilding, especially as it has lost the panelling that was the best feature. Our speaker was to be Martin Hulse from the Cockburn Association, but he has just resigned to take up another post and his replacement is still to be confirmed.

We look forward to a lively discussion on these subjects and hope it will be a good meeting. Please come yourself and ask anyone who is interested to come as well.

AUTUMN MEETING

Saturday 13th December

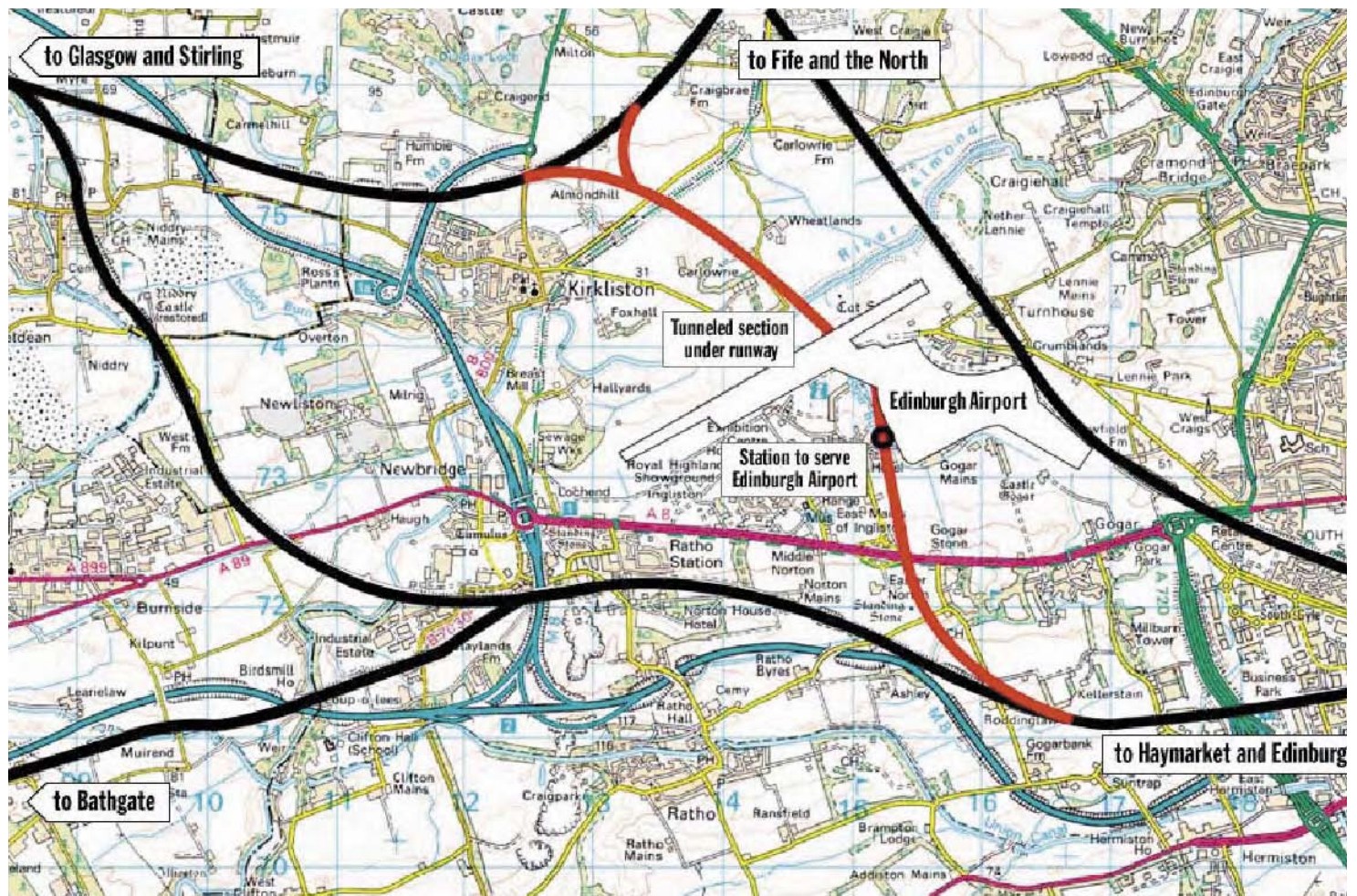
at 14:00

GROSVENOR HOTEL

Grosvenor St., Haymarket,

EDINBURGH

Members and Friends welcome



Rural Transport Futures – transport solutions for a thriving countryside

Brian Balmain

This Report was funded by the Countryside Agency as part of Transport 2000's national Rural Transport Partnership and by the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

The reasons for these two bodies deciding to fund such a report were: in the case of the Countryside Agency - their view that "transport [planning] must play a central part" in the efforts to achieve its vision of "a countryside that is environmentally healthy, rich in landscape and socially strong". In the case of Citizen's Advice, it was the bleak picture formed from their rural Bureau reports of a rural environment in which there is "real hardship as a result of poor or no public transport. [Where] lack of public transport can adversely affect rural-dwellers' health, educational opportunities, employment, access to financial services, income and expenditure".

Both organisations, while recognising that there has been greater policy attention and new funding for rural transport, strongly believe that a great deal more needs to be done.

The report "shows what rural transport in Britain should be like. It identifies what we need to do to build a rural transport network that offers an attractive and effective alternative to the car, based on lessons from other European countries where imaginative approaches to rural transport are already being developed."

The report reviews transport in rural Britain, illustrates the kind of good practice we should be aiming to achieve by case studies from Europe, points out differences between Britain and other European countries which make some good ideas difficult to apply here and offers proposals which could be applied in the short term, but would have significant positive effects, and ones which would be applied over the longer term that would more gradually transform the rural transport scene in Britain.

The in-depth case studies - Friesland, the Netherlands; Nordrhein - Westfalen, Germany; and the Greater Copenhagen Region, Denmark - were selected to illustrate a range of different types of rural area, from peri-urban to fairly remote. They offer a positive example to Britain, having succeeded in delivering high-quality rural public transport and road management. While not being perfect, the general thrust of their strategies is successfully delivering better transport and a better quality of life for their citizens.

The mini-case studies involved looking in detail at specific projects in a variety of rural areas in Austria, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, and Germany.

The Report makes clear that there is no single template that can be applied to tackle rural transport problems. Note the term 'rural transport typology' – a recently developed analysis and description of different types of rural area and the different transport problems they face used by D Gray in "Rural Transport: an overview of key issues" a report for Commission for Integrated Transport (2001).

Some general conditions seem to be necessary no matter the area if rural transport problems are to be effectively tackled:

- local problems need local solutions
- fully (information, ticketing, physical) integrated, accessible transport networks
- a national policy framework within which regional areas can formulate policies to suit their own particular needs and have the means to implement them
- ability, within regions, to develop solutions aimed at specific local level problems.
- at all levels – accountability to, and responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of the communities involved.

In Scotland, we would seem to be well placed to meet the overall,

Rail restoration to Kirkintilloch – Milton of Campsie – Lennoxton

Back in 2001 prospects for a restoration of the Lenzie-Kirkintilloch line (closed 1964) looked bleak, when the newly-formed Kirkintilloch Initiative (a partnership body of East Dunbartonshire Council and the land/property disposal arm of the NHS Great Glasgow Board) anticipated building a Kirkintilloch Relief Road on the former railway solum, thereby irrevocably prejudicing the opportunity of easy/feasible restoration of any future passenger line.

Following recommendations and meetings with Kirkintilloch Initiative and submissions to East Dunbartonshire's revised Local Plan made by Ken Sutherland, both bodies have now officially emphasised the case for not only safeguarding the Kirkintilloch rail route for re-opening but have now gone further, with a strengthened commitment to try and secure restoration of a passenger link through Kirkintilloch to Milton of Campsie and Lennoxton. This form of 'incremental network extension' is seen locally as an opportunity to offer these fast-growing commuter townships the opportunity and benefits of attractive, competitive and sustainable public transport as a meaningful alternative to the otherwise insatiable demands and unacceptable environmental degradation/congestion caused by car commuting.

As with other previous 'no hope' prospects for rail restoration, the adoption of a more 'think positive' approach by official bodies can often take place fairly quickly, and with a self-fulfilling prospect of progress with previous 'problems' being seen as challenges to be overcome rather than used as crutches for continued inaction and defeatism.



basic requirements, given:

- the existence of the Scottish Parliament presiding over a country with a small population of approximately 5,000,000
- local councils which are already working together to provide area wide transport facilities - with the long established Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive an outstanding example.

It seems perverse, and is deeply troubling that the Executive is contemplating the setting up of a transport quango - a handing over of what should be a democratic, transparent function, integral to the working of our Parliament to a body which would be unelected and unaccountable to the people over whose lives it would have profound influence - and the destroying of the SPTE, the one aspect of public transport management in Scotland that can be favourably compared with proven best practice in the rest of Europe.

This Report should be compulsory reading for everyone involved in and interested in the provision of public transport, and ways of addressing the need to reduce car dependence and use.

Glasgow and West-Central Scotland : meeting with SPTA Chairman

Rail Future committee members Ken Sutherland and Ralph Barker met with Councillor Alistair Watson, the recently elected Chairman of Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority, during early September and were hugely encouraged by his determination to oversee early implementation of several key items on 'long planned' rail infrastructure projects essential to achieve a more competitive and better used rail network throughout Greater Glasgow/West-Central Scotland.

Restoration of the former four-track rail section between Shields Junction (Glasgow) and Arkleston (Paisley) which had been reduced to double track as an 'economy measure' in the 1960s (and against the advice of the Scottish Railway Development Association) has now been justified for the wider capacity and reliability benefits it will confer across the west of Scotland.

Plans for a Glasgow Airport Rail Link indicated a 1¼ mile spur off the main Paisley-Gourock line at Paisley St James station, and will hopefully open by 2008. The Airport rail station may also be designed to allow future through service running over a restored Renfrew-Braehead-Cardonald loop to give greater route flexibility and avoid capacity restrictions which have already been found to restrict Manchester's similar terminal spur station.

Restoration of the long-promised Larkhall-Hamilton route (4 miles) is planned for 2006 and will also include restoration of the Maryhill-Annie-land connecting spur which will logically link and encourage greater use of the existing Glasgow Queen Street (High Level)-Maryhill suburban service with the Annie-land interconnection to the wider Strathclyde electrified network. A new intermediate Dawsholm Station will also access significant new housing in the adjacent Kelvindale area.

As a precursor to the CrossRail link (recommended by the Greater Glasgow Transportation Study in 1968), Strathclyde Passenger Transport is now contributing to a £500,000 technical study necessary to support promotion of the required Private Bill to the Scottish Parliament. Possible completion of the £50m CrossRail could be simultaneous with the Airport link and include new interchange stations at West Street and Glasgow Cross (possibly also a Gorbals station as part of inner city revitalisation).

Councillor Watson also welcomed the Central Scotland Transport Corridor Study's recommendation for a link from the Springburn electrified line at Garngad to give direct (possibly electric) through running to Cumbernauld and Falkirk. This, taken together with the restoration of the 14-mile Airdrie-Bathgate line (with the Scottish Executive having committed the required £105m) would greatly improve economic opportunity and social mobility, and should be integrated with the required track capacity increase now required at Edinburgh Waverley.

Electrification of the main Glasgow-Falkirk-Edinburgh 'flagship' line, as was recommended by the 1993 Joint Local Authorities/ScotRail study, would both reduce end-to-end journey times down to possibly the 30-35 minutes envisaged by ScotRail in the mid 1980s, improve track capacity and reliability for associated lines, and give a modernised interconnecting network via CrossRail across central Scotland.

SPT would be making strenuous representations to the Scottish Executive against the concept of a single National Transport Body for Scotland - largely on account of the loss of local democratically accountable control over investment, service patterns and fare structures all of which have been successfully developed over three decades by the SPT body. A fuller outline of Councillor Watson's views on this issue, and those of Councillor Charlie Gordon (Leader of Glasgow City Council), is enclosed with these Branch Notes for your information.

In conjunction with the Scottish Transport Minister, Nicol Stephen, Cllr. Watson indicated that 'strenuous representations' would continue to be made against the announced cuts in required track maintenance and renewal announced by Network Rail/Strategic Rail Authority - a policy publicly condemned by the SPT as 'madness' and likely, as elsewhere in Scotland, to result in deteriorating journey times and service cuts which might be hard to reverse.

Rail Future Scotland's research officer

Ken Sutherland

brings members up to speed with these two progress reports and the one on the previous page

Inverness-Wick/Thurso line : growing demands for the implementation of the ScotRail intended Dornoch link

Although no formal Scottish Executive commitment has yet been given for this long deferred route modernisation project (advocated by ScotRail in 1985), there has been a welcome increase in local support from individuals and community groups which reflects growing anger and frustration over lack of progress to achieve this vital improvement which is fundamental to achieve a better-used, more competitive, efficient and economic line.

Particularly significant to the campaigning effort is the input from recently elected Rob Gibson MSP (Highlands & Islands SNP) which, in his 5th June 2003 speech to the Scottish Parliament's debate on Rural Rail Services, he robustly asked Transport Minister Nicol Stephen 'what he intended to do about the implementation of the Dornoch Rail Link?' The Scottish Executive, argued Rob Gibson, should give a time when this link will figure in their plans for the north of Scotland rail services, and on the basis that this vital modernisation 26-mile route shortening/45-minute journey shortening improvement is justified, since the North Highland line is not a branch line but 'a part of the main spine of Scotland which goes all the way from Thurso and Wick to the Borders'.

Rob Gibson is continuing to pursue the Dornoch Rail Link with the Transport Minister and also hopes to form a Cross-Party Action Group to promote this issue - perhaps along similar lines to the Borders Rail Action Group which now looks on the verge of achieving restoration of at least 37 miles of track from Edinburgh to Galashiels (as the first instalment of through running to Carlisle).

Additional and very welcome support has now also come with the intervention of the Rail Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) which has submitted a detailed report to the Steer Davies Gleave Consultancy, arguing the legitimacy of the Dornoch Rail Link. Steer Davies Gleave is currently evaluating the Highland rail network on behalf of Highlands and Islands Enterprise. RMT's Scottish Organiser, Phil McGarry, contends that the unacceptably long and tedious time taken up by the hour-long inland 'Lairg Loop' detour results in a hopelessly uncompetitive and poorly-used rail service by its main customer base in Caithness/Orkney and the larger East Sutherland townships. It is regarded at best as a transport irrelevance and at worst as an embarrassing handicap when set against the ever-improving A9 road being provided for rail's car/bus/lorry competitors.

Although the RMT point out that the Inverness-Thurso/Wick passenger service will continue to run on a 'life-support' basis until the Dornoch Rail Link is built, they feel that the case for early implementation of this ScotRail intended project should not be indefinitely delayed by further debate on how best to serve the continuing public transport needs of the small scattered communities served by the Lairg Loop. This is a separate issue from the imperative of providing a modern and competitive rail service to the overwhelming majority of the line's existing and potential users. In terms of a North Highland Railway fit for the needs and expectations of the 21st century, the RMT contends that the Dornoch Rail Link is the key ingredient in reducing the current snail's-pace service down to about 2½ hours or better, which is the threshold of competitive credibility if the line beyond Tain is to have any assured long-term future.

Situation Vacant - Railfuture Scotland Secretary

David Hansen writes:

For the past few years, but especially over the last year, I have found the task of being Secretary increasingly difficult. This is not due to anything in the Society, it is simply because of other things happening in my life. As a result I have now resigned as Secretary, but I remain willing to do smaller tasks.

We need a new Secretary, so what does this entail? In many ways it is as much as one wants to do. Two meetings a year have traditionally been organised, one in the spring and one in the autumn. The spring meeting is the AGM and must be held. There are notes to write for Railwatch and the editor of Branch Notes is always after material from members. There is a three-drawer filing cabinet worth of papers. There is a range of correspondence from various groups.

The Secretary has traditionally done agendas and minutes for the Committee. However, an excellent suggestion has been made that these could be done by someone else to reduce the load on the Secretary. An excellent idea!

I wish my successor all the best. It is an interesting job, during which one finds out all sorts of interesting things. It is also possible to play a small part in getting things done and there are some things I can look back on and say to myself that I played a small part in making it happen. The amount of necessary work is relatively small, but if you have time it can be expanded to as much time as you have spare.

TRANSform Scotland

The AGM held on November 8th and attended by several Rail Future members, concluded with debates on 5 motions. The idea of the motions is to enable members to raise issues which they believe should determine the policy and direction of TRANSform Scotland, or conversely for the Board to get confirmation that the membership agrees with the line the Board is taking. Four of the five motions were passed by acclamation, so there's no problem there - we are all in general agreement (though we could have spent a long time on detailed wording). But there was one motion which had to go to a vote. To cut the preamble, the two main clauses of this were:

1. This AGM calls on the Board of TRANSform Scotland to press the Scottish Executive and the SRA to give priority to upgrades of Waverley Station's rail capacity, service quality and passenger access to the city centre ahead of heavy rail access to Edinburgh Airport.
2. This AGM calls on the Board of TRANSform Scotland to press the City of Edinburgh Council and Transport Initiatives Edinburgh to progress light rail access to Edinburgh Airport by means of a new Gogar interchange between the heavy rail (Fife line) and the proposed Tramline 2. [Ed's note: this is rephrased slightly to shorten the text and clarify it].

Fife & St Andrews

Jane Ann Liston reports from Fife

Following the inclusion of safeguarding a route, albeit unspecified, for a St Andrews railway line and station in the new Fife Structure Plan, consultation is underway for the new North East Fife Local Plan, and it is expected that when this is published a definite route will be included. Already the Council is ensuring that developments do not impinge upon any likely routes, based upon the suggestions in Scott-Wilson Railway's Fife & South Tayside Rail Study (1999).

There has been a study carried out into rail services in the Firth of Tay area, led by Dundee City Council, which included examining a St Andrews line. This exercise however concentrated upon benefits to the Tayside area, so as most Leuchars passengers are travelling to and from the south rather than to and from Dundee it is not surprising that this limited study did not find in favour of a line. One suspects that they did not even consider new markets such as golfers travelling between St Andrews and Carnoustie - a 'Fairway to Heaven' service which would surely appeal to visiting players.

However Fife Council has just agreed to commission 3 rail studies, into lines at Lochore Meadows, Leven and St Andrews. Details are limited due to the vagaries of commercial confidentiality; however there is reason to believe that they will be more positive than anything hitherto carried out. The attraction of a service between the Capital of Scotland straight to the Home of Golf is likely to be considerable. Developments are eagerly awaited.

In brief the arguments to support this are that the cost of the heavy rail realignment are out of proportion to the amount of use and benefits of the proposed scheme, as well as increasing journey times for other rail passengers. In addition it could be seen as encouraging people to use air travel. The arguments for the proposed new heavy rail station at the Airport are that the money allocated for that would not be reallocated to Waverley and a Gogar interchange, and also that the rail scheme is not a local one, but intended to benefit longer-distance rail travellers as well (especially ones coming from Aberdeen and Inverness directions).

This debate could have continued into the evening, but the Chair, David Spavin, had to call for a vote. The motion was carried by 11 votes to 7. If you want to contribute to the debate - which I am sure will be ongoing - come to our meeting on December 13th (see page 1) where the Edinburgh Airport proposals are one of the two topics.

New Appointment to Transform Scotland Board

David Hansen, as well as resigning from the Rail Future post has resigned as Board Member of TRANSform Scotland. A late nomination from Rail Future Scotland of Tony Lennon to the Board was accepted at the AGM. There are now 4 of the 15 Board Members who are also members of Rail Future.

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All possible effort is made to ensure that facts in this newsletter are accurate. Please tell the editor of any inaccuracies.

Opinions are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the policies of railfuture and railfuture Scotland.

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