

Spring Meeting Sat 5th April at 14:00

in Royal Over-Seas League, 100 Princes St., Edinburgh

Topic : Freight

Programme:

- Talk - speaker Tom Curry of Direct Rail Services [DRS]
- Questions to the speaker
- Coffee/Tea break
- Branch AGM

Branch AGM

Agenda:

- Reports from Office-Bearers (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer)
- Election of Office-Bearers

General Discussion:

- a chance for members to ask questions, and to provide guidance to the Committee for policy and activity for the coming year

New volunteers for office or committee membership will be welcomed. Have you considered whether you could bring anything to the Committee?

ROSL: Just west of Frederick Street junction with Princes St.

Recruitment

If you know people interested in what we do, or will be attending any events where there is opportunity to promote the Society, spare copies of Branch Notes, Railwatch and membership leaflets are available from Tony Lennon [see page 4 for how to contact him].

DORLAG - Dornoch Rail Link Action Group

Railfuture has been working with the DORLAG in putting a submission to the council about the future development of the line. The council's local plan claims that the rail line can be a "key driver" in the economic prospects of settlements such as Ardgay, Bonar Bridge and Lairg, which will be bypassed should the bridge at Dornoch be built. Ken Sutherland said "Despite Golspie, Brora and Helmsdale all having rail stations and Dornoch being the proposed site of one, these settlements have been conspicuously air-brushed from the council's submission." The four towns above are identified elsewhere in the plan as major sustainable growth centres, and they have 60% of Sutherland's total population. And yet they have been bypassed in the structure plan. The council's plan was published during October 2007, but new evidence from the consultants' recommendations, supporting the Dornoch rail link has become available in January this year. We hope that the council will have the sense to think positive and to recognize new evidence and to incorporate it into their plans.

Press release – Dornoch Rail Link study recommended for implementation through a STAG 2 study.

A recent modified STAG 1 study completed for the Dornoch Rail Link Action Group (DORLAG) by MVA Consultancy in conjunction with Corus Railway Infrastructure Services has concluded that the proposed Dornoch Firth Rail Crossing would give "significantly increased accessibility and related economic benefits for Caithness and Sutherland", compared to an improved bus service for the region, resulting from the proven 45-minute journey time saving. This STAG 1 study supports the recent technical engineering study on the Dornoch Rail Link completed for DORLAG by Corus.

Mark Norton, Convener of DORLAG, stated the report's positive findings for the DRL would be a hugely welcomed by the people of Caithness and Sutherland, with this project delivering a greatly improved passenger rail service, "fit for purpose in the 21st Century".

This scheme would also greatly improve the commercial viability of freight services on the Far North Line by enabling substantially improved efficiencies in locomotive, traincrew and rolling stock deployment and fuel savings, on account of the 45 minute time reduction (a critical 90 minutes' savings on the round trip to Central Scotland freight yards). These benefits are compared with the assessed engineering costs of the scheme of £97 million, which could increase to £118 million with additional contingency costs.

This recommended investment for the Inverness - Caithness line (also delivering a better link with Orkney) should be seen as compensating for "decades of neglect" and denial of legitimate improvements, now very visibly handicapping rail's competitive credibility with A9 road based car/ bus/ lorry.

Mark Norton, Convener of DORLAG, said the report's findings, indicating a potential 50% increase in the rail passenger journeys by the Dornoch Crossing, were confirmation of a travel demand not currently being satisfied by the historic rail route.

He added that the very positive findings in the report marked a "pivotal stage" in further pursuit of this scheme, and would be a massive boost to the case being brought by the Association of Caithness Community Councils' Petition PE894, now under consideration by Scotland's Parliamentary Transport Committee.

Further information: Mark Norton, Convener, DORLAG, 01847-851743 or 0770-970-9111

Documentation of the campaign, consultations etc. now on website at www.dorlag.co.uk

South Sub News

Delay: Members of Holyrood's petitions committee, who met to discuss the £20 million plan on Tuesday, asked for further consideration of the matter until May 9.

Light Rail: City leaders have agreed to look at the possibility of using specialist tram-trains on a future South Sub commuter service. The vehicles, popular in Germany, have an undercarriage which can operate on both tram and train tracks. The main advantage of the tram-trains is that they would overcome capacity issues at Waverley Station - which is hampering plans for reopening the South Sub rail service.

TRANSform Glasgow

Towards the end of last year a report was presented to the board of TRANSform Scotland, titled TRANSform Glasgow. The rationale for this is explained in its opening paragraph quoted below

While there are a number of area-or mode-specific groups operating in Glasgow, we felt that these are generally small and there is currently no-one campaigning across all sustainable transport issues. In addition, some of the groups are not specifically Glasgow-focused in their work. Furthermore, we felt that TRANSform Scotland, as a national organisation, should raise its profile in and around Scotland's largest city. Our experience shows that, in the west, the organisation is sometimes (although not always) recognised by name but people are often unsure of the aims and objectives of the organisation.

The report then went on to summarise the present state of public transport in Glasgow, and then to outline some of its deficiencies. It then listed the various organisations who are involved in promoting and campaigning for better public transport and looked at the organisations in connection with the various modes of transport - walking, cycling, rail, bus, Subway etc. The conclusion of this short paper is the following paragraph:

We have established the need for a greater campaigning presence on sustainable transport issues in Glasgow. The city's transport network under-performs particularly on quality and while the local press are keen to point this out, they tend to concentrate on over-ambitious (and/or impossible) Subway extensions and road-building schemes as putative solutions. There is a greater need to point out the range of solutions and the potential quality of the infrastructure already in place.

It concludes by making some proposals for action, including:

- *Draw on TRANSform Scotland's considerable alliance-building experience to create an effective forum for campaigning on sustainable transport issues in Glasgow.*
- *Investigate opportunities to build up campaigns work which does not require political lobbying or media work, e.g. involve arts and education organisations as well as bodies such as The Poverty Alliance.*
- *Utilise the forthcoming Commonwealth Games to focus investment proposals on sustainable measures.*

As Railfuture is mentioned in the report, and as we do have a representative on the board - Tony Lennon - we did discuss this report at our Railfuture committee meeting. As a result of our discussions, Donald MacPhee compiled a response to make to the chair of TRANSform Scotland. His first paragraph is quoted below:

The above report has been circulated to our Committee members and was the subject of lengthy discussion at our recent Committee meeting. I have been asked to pass on to you a summary of the views of the Committee.

Firstly Railfuture Scotland (RFS) very much supports TRANSform Scotland's general desire to promote more vigorously the various aspects of sustainable transport in the greater Glasgow area. Over the past 30 years or so RFS has been involved in a variety of campaigns to promote rail development as well as participating in the promotion wider sustainable transport initiatives in this part of Scotland. We have, for example supported by cash donations the legal challenge to the M74 extension co-ordinated by Friends of the Earth Scotland and have been members of the Glasgow for People alliance.

Despite the recent successes in rail development, I think that all of us who campaign in our field of activity would agree that there is much more that could be done. If this report is an indication that TRANSform Scotland has a desire to increase its activities in Glasgow as well as other parts of Scotland, then is to be welcomed.

He then went on to detail some more specific criticisms we had of some of the details in the report but concluded with this statement:

In conclusion, the RFS Committee accept and support TRANSform Scotland's broad policy objectives as legitimate and worthwhile. The number of our members that are on the Board is an indication of how much we value the work that TRANSform Scotland does. We support the idea of creating a TRANSform Glasgow body as it appears it could complement our own activities and we would be willing to get involved as much as our resources allow. It is a worthwhile idea which does not need a report which contains inaccurate and misleading information to justify it.

I would be interested to discover how TRANSform Scotland intends to proceed with this objective and would be pleased to learn of any developments.

The Railway Development Society Ltd (the official name of Railfuture) will hold its next Annual General Meeting on Saturday 10 May 2008.

Doors open 10am. AGM starts at 11am. Finish around 5pm.

The 2008 is being held in Coventry at Warwick Road United Reformed Church, Warwick Row, Coventry CV1 1EX.

As usual the venue is within 15 minutes walk from the railway station.

NO CYCLES ON CROSSRAIL?

The Cyclists Touring Club is fighting plans to ban bikes from London's Crossrail. The scheme proposes to forbid any bikes from the central route, and there will be no cycle parking at main stations. The CTC has launched a petition against the plans, which are due to be examined by a Parliament Select Committee in the next few months. Crossrail users would take lifts from ground level down to underground platforms, and campaigners claim there would be plenty of room for bikes. - *Bikeradar*

Editor's Note: I include on this item because of a personal interest. I was one of the three board members of CTC who signed the parliamentary petition for this - all 13 copies were signed standing at the reception desk of London City Hall during a European Mobility Week conference, the same day that my Brompton was stolen from outside that building, an event I remember well!

Selling it off

Almost a panic this week. Donald MacPhee put out an e-mail asking if anything anybody knew anything about the sale of two pieces of land in Edinburgh by BSB. Lawrence Marshall responded that these were the Lochend loop [which could provide an extra set of tracks between Abbeyhill and Portobello] while the other was a disused brewery siding at Haymarket [which could possibly provide a bay platform at the south side of Haymarket station to match platform 0 on the north side. Lawrence also pointed out that both of these pieces of land had been marked by Sestran and by the City of Edinburgh Council as being possible for future development in connection with railways. The call was just about to go out to railway campaigners, including in this newsletter to Railfuture members, to try to get this land are preserved for possible railway development when Lawrence put out another message saying that he had been in touch with BSB, and that both of these pieces of land were being bid for by Network Rail with the support of Transport Scotland. So hopefully we do not need to worry about a new office block or housing being built on these two particular bits of land, but it does remind us that we all need to be alert to this kind of sale of land which can be used to develop our railways.

Story from BBC NEWS:

Support for St Andrews rail link

A survey has revealed that more than three quarters of people in St Andrews would use a reinstated train link.

Local campaign group Starlink sent questionnaires to residents and existing bus commuters to establish if there was any support for trains. Of those who responded, 78% of those who do not use buses said they would ditch the car in favour of rail. Respondents said the train would be quicker and more convenient the present journey involving changing at Leuchars.

About 20,000 copies of the surveys were posted, left on cars at Leuchars railway station and distributed in local pubs. The findings are based on the 611 questionnaires which were returned. About 79% of the responses were from residents with the rest coming from people who commute into the town. Commuter Jane Ann Liston, who organised the petition, said: "This has been a fairly amateur investigation but it is one which has not really been done before. "The information will now be made available to Fife Council to see whether there is anything that can be done to get a rail link here." The survey also found that 80% of existing bus commuters would increase their use of public transport if the train link was re-established.

20K questionnaires distributed during November and December: 6800 in 'St Andrews in Focus' magazine to every household in St A, 3000 to all students in halls of residence, the remainder handed to rail passengers at Leuchars, distributed to parked cars at Leuchars and St Andrews (including streets used by commuters) and, probably the vast majority, left in bundles in hotels, restaurants, pubs and Janeann Listonshops.

Janeann Liston, tireless campaigner for STARLINK and now known as something of an expert on British Butterflies from her recent Mastermind appearances, has given us some more details:

Summary of questionnaire results:

611 responses.

79% of responses were from residents of St Andrews; 9% from commuters into St Andrews; 12% from visitors.

80% of residents who do take the bus to Leuchars for the train would use rail more if there were rail services to St Andrews.

78% of residents who do not take the bus to Leuchars for the train would use a St Andrews railway (as most of these are driving a car, this suggests a good opportunity for modal shift).

Those 2 figures comprise 79% of the residents' responses; another 15% are users of the bus to Leuchars who would make the same amount of rail journeys if a St Andrews railway were built.

Therefore support for the railway from the respondees is overwhelming.

Snippets from Tony Smale's Rail User Express [Feb 2008]

The Stranraer to Ayr Line Support Association (SAYLSA) held its inaugural meeting last September following concerns about the line, particularly the section south of Girvan, once Stena relocates its ferry services to Cairnryan in the Spring of 2009. The Chairman of SAYLSA, Richard Carr, said that despite plans to rebuild Stranraer Station and assurances that the line between Girvan and Stranraer will not close in the foreseeable future, big questions remain with First ScotRail suggesting that bus services between Cairnryan and Girvan Rail Station present the best option for ferry passengers after Stena relocate. SAYLSA want to see hourly services between Girvan and Ayr and improved timetabling for the whole route to ensure better connections at all points between Stranraer, Glasgow and Newcastle. The association also hopes to improve facilities at stations in partnership with community groups. Already, passengers at Girvan Station are benefiting from a brighter and more

Reasons given for supporting a railway:

- * Less hassle than changing from a bus, especially with luggage or small children;
- * Some disabled and elderly people find the footbridge/ramp at Leuchars too difficult to get over; a railway would remove the need to negotiate it;
- * A railway would be more convenient than a bus and train;
- * A railway would be quicker than a bus and train;
- * Bus fare perceived as expensive for such a short journey; a railway would make the journey cheaper;
- * People prefer using a train to a bus, which is considered more comfortable;
- * Buses don't connect with the trains; bus often seen pulling away as train get in. Apparently 15 minutes (longer in the evenings) is too long to wait for the next one;
- * Claim that last bus leaves Leuchars before last train arrives (that is not supposed to be the case); worry about getting back from Leuchars if on a late train;
- * Assertion that many visitors don't realise how far Leuchars is from St Andrews; one B & B provider said she has lost bookings once her potential guests realised the nearest railway station was not actually in St Andrews;
- * No sheltered area to wait for bus at Leuchars; station has waiting room.

colourful station environment, thanks to a successful partnership between First ScotRail and local schools. The partnership came about following an invitation from SAYLSA for the schools to join them in adopting Girvan Station as part of First ScotRail's 'Adopt a Station' scheme. SAYLSA has taken up residence in the vacant shop on the station platform to sell refreshments and souvenirs on Saturday mornings. A further public meeting about the line's development is planned for 12 Mar 08 in Girvan. Details about the group can be obtained from membership secretary Irene Climie on 01465 714642 (evenings or weekends).

The Friends of the West Highlands Line seem to have found a successful niche market for themselves by publishing a glossy, illustrated magazine which covers the whole rail scene in Scotland both past and present, with further pages devoted to the Hebridean and Clyde ferries for good measure. Focussing on the work of the Friends, we read that they were represented at ACoRP's Llandudno conference by their secretary who reminds us that "the situation in Scotland is different to that in England and Wales. They have Community Railways. The nearest we have to that is our own Highland Rail Partnership, soon to become the Rail Advisory Group in HITRANS. We also have First ScotRail's successful Adopt a Station project..." He goes on to ponder whether the Community Railway approach would work for the 150-mile West Highland Line. The Friends are presenting their stand again at this year's Model Rail exhibition in Glasgow, and will be holding their AGM on 17 May at a hotel in Oban.

Quoting a story in the North Berwick News, the Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES) tell us that North Berwick has been named the best unmanned station in the region, with an acknowledgement to the work of members of North Berwick in Bloom. The Dunbar correspondent reports that services provided by their two new franchisees have been running satisfactorily, adding: "anecdotal evidence points to there not being a huge difference in perception..."

RAGES responded to Arriva Cross Country's draft 2009 timetable and received a reply from the Company saying "we will now carefully consider all of the comments received, including the issues that you raised, as we continue to discuss its introduction with industry partners. We will keep you updated on our progress throughout the process."

“Short-term strategy (2008 – 2009)

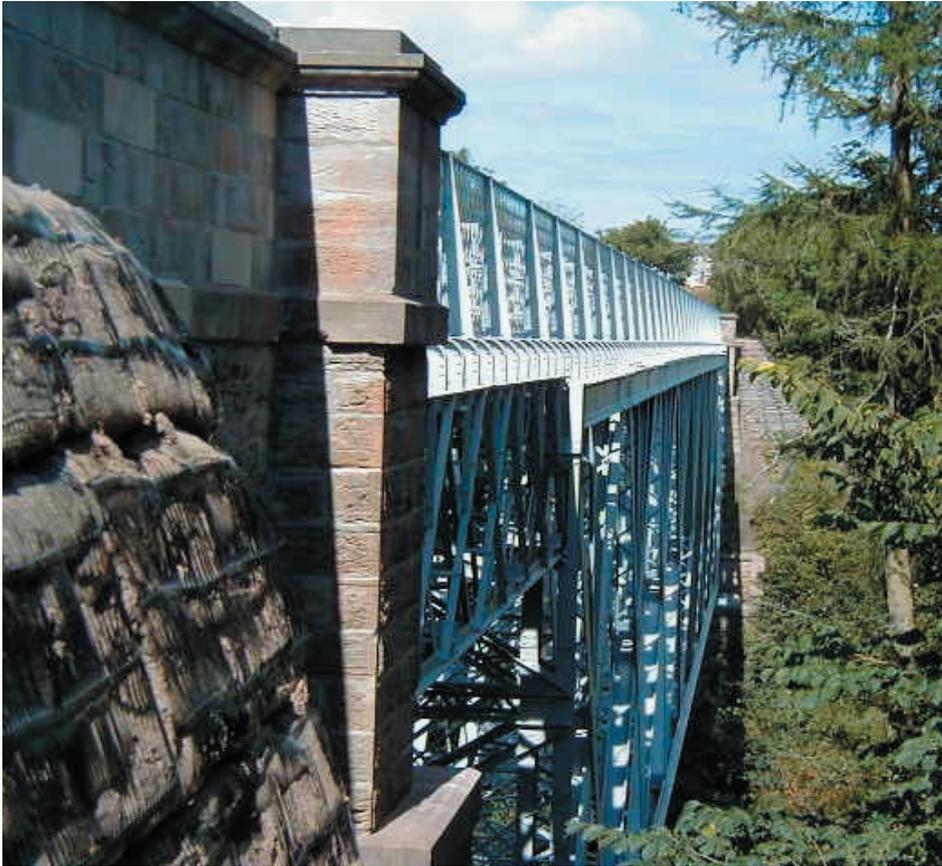
The most acute issue on the ECML is accommodating the forecast growth in both passenger and freight traffic, although a number of performance issues are also apparent. Significant additional capacity cannot be delivered in this timescale, although development work will continue on a number of proposed initiatives for delivery after 2009. Small scale power supply improvements will be made to facilitate additional London suburban services to address peak crowding on the Cambridge route, with enhanced switching arrangements in the Alexandra Palace area and enhanced booster transformers between Hitchin and Cambridge. Platforms will be lengthened at Cambridge and Royston. These additional services are those proposed by First Capital Connect.”

“So what?” you may say, “doesn’t affect us much”, but this is just one paragraph from the start of the ECML Route Utilisation Strategy report. It may not seem much, but it’s getting something done over the next 21 months. To find out more the whole 209-page document is downloadable for free on the web at the address below (hint the second version is [slightly] more legible, but the spaces MUST be included)

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/rus%20documents/route%20utilisation%20strategies/east%20coast%20main%20line/east%20coast%20main%20line%20rus.pdf>

http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse_documents/rus_documents/route_utilisation_strategies/east_coast_main_line/east_coast_main_line_rus.pdf

Contacting the Secretary



I may have caused a little confusion in the last issue. When I came out of the Southern General Hospital in December 2006 I was not able to return to my house in Leith, as it’s on the second flat, and neither I nor my wheelchair do steps! However, Edinburgh Council did find me a small apartment in a sheltered housing complex, which was ready-furnished and fairly suitable for a wheelchair user. I started looking for a new house, but it was October 2007 before I found one that I liked. I got the keys for in this on November the fifth and was hoping that by the end of the year I would have moved into it, so put my new address into the last issue of the branch notes. However, it’s now the beginning of March, and I’m still living in Gilmerton. Hopefully, the work to put in a ramp and make some other adaptations will be starting soon, so in this issue I’m printing both addresses. All that I am sure that I can positively say is that before the next issue in October I will be in Loanhead! Now if they could open the Edinburgh, Loanhead and Roslin railway again I would only have go 300m to get to a station. It’s only about ½km walk from my new house to the Bilston viaduct, so if you are in the area and visiting that, come and have a cuppa with me - and if you don’t know it, it is worth seeing.

http://www.railbrit.co.uk/Edinburgh_Loanhead_and_Roslin_Railway/frame.htm

Chairman	Donald MacPhee	87 Chatelherault Cresc., HAMILTON, ML3 7PR	01698 424671	donaldmacphee@blueyonder.co.uk
Secretary & Branch Notes Editor	Mike Harrison	16 Ravenscroft Place, EDINBURGH, EH17 8QU >>> 65 the Loan, LOANHEAD, Midlothian, EH20 9AG	0131 554 7773 >>> 0131 448 0930	Secretary@RailFutureScotland.org.uk
Treasurer	Charles Niven	9 Comiston Terr., EDINBURGH, EH10 6AJ		cncs23385@blueyonder.co.uk
Research Officer	Ken Sutherland	12a Direlton Gate, Bearsden, GLASGOW, G61 1NP	0141 942 0194	kensutherland511@msn.com
Committee Mbr.	Anthony Lennon	4 Airbles Farm Road, MOTHERWELL, ML1 3AZ	01698 427339	alennon@hoggan.freeserve.co.uk
RDS (Scotland) Sales	Ralph Barker	90 Carlisle Road, CRAWFORD, ML12 6TW		ralphbarker@tiscali.co.uk
Committee Mbr.	Allison Cosgrove			allison@eleutheria.co.uk
Committee Mbr.	Janeann Liston			Janeann@louisxiv.demon.co.uk
Committee Mbr.	Bill Russell			wtrussellma@tiscali.co.uk
Committee Mbr.	John Whyte			

www.RailFutureScotland.org.uk

Branch Notes 65 edited & compiled by Mike Harrison, 65 the Loan, LOANHEAD, Midlothian, EH20 9AG
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