

railfuture SCOTTISH BRANCH NOTES

Autumn Meeting

Sat 21st November at 14:00

Renfield Centre, 260 Bath St., Glasgow, G2 4JP

Topic : "Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvement Programme"
Geoff Cooke (Network Rail)

Programme:

- Talk
- Questions to the speaker
- Coffee/Tea break
- Open Forum



Travel:

- The Renfield Centre is diagonally opposite the Kings Theatre.
- Oasis Café provides a full range of catering services to the Centre customers. The Café is open to the public.
- Charing Cross rail station is on the low level line between Queen Street Low Level and Partick rail stations.
- Local bus routes 18, 44, 42 and 57 stop outside the centre on Bath Street travelling west and first stop in Sauchiehall Street travelling east.
- Multi-storey car park located at Elmbank Crescent (at the back of the Kings Theatre).

The Starlink (St Andrews Rail Link) campaign carried out a survey at its exhibition at the Scottish Senior Open Golf Championship, which included a statement of the campaign's aims, declarations of support from celebrities and other supporters and maps showing possible routes for the line.

Of those who responded to the questions, 71 per cent said they they would use a rail link to St Andrews, including 70 per cent of those attending from outwith the town.

Convenor Jane Ann Liston said: 'Such a result clearly demonstrates the great potential for a railway. Some 96 per cent of the non-residents questioned travelled by car to St Andrews, and 70 per cent of those said they would use a train. This demonstrates the potential for modal shift from cars, which the Government and Fife Council claim to wish to achieve. Supporters of the campaign might like to contact Fife Council during the forthcoming Local Plan consultation, demanding that strategic areas of land which are likely to form part of any new route – beside the North Haugh, for example – are safeguarded from any future development.'

PAPER COPY?

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Please send an email to Secretary@RailfutureScotland.org.uk

Glasgow Chamber of Commerce chief Stuart Patrick tells why it was the wrong decision and why the fight must continue

As we understand it, out of the £400million being spent on the entire GARL project, more than £200m will now be lost to the regional economy of Glasgow just when we needed it most. And we won't have a direct rail link to the airport.

It would also have supported Glasgow's position as the fastest growing business tourism and conference destination in Europe. The Department for Transport estimates passenger numbers at Glasgow Airport are predicted to almost double, from 8.2m in 2003 to more than 15m a year in 2030. Currently, 95% of people travelling to Glasgow Airport do so by road - many on the congested M8. This is unacceptable for a modern city, both from a logistical and environmental point of view. The rail link would provide more travel choice for these airport users - one train every 15 minutes - establishing a sustainable transport link to Glasgow Airport, which is a major employer and one of the biggest wealth generators in the region.

However, while the fight to save GARL will continue until the Scottish Budget in February, a wider issue must now be addressed - what exactly is the Scottish Gov-

Editorial

No 68: November 2009

GETTING INTO THE NEWS

One of the difficulties for a campaigning organisation like Railfuture is to find an opportunity to be heard. We get "invitations" to attend many conferences on rail topics. Very occasionally we get a free place at one of these, but most of them are organised by commercial companies whose main aim is to make a profit for themselves and not to be of public service. Although we are eligible for the lowest rate at these conferences, the normal rate is about £140 for a one-day conference. Some of our members attend these conferences at their own expense, although some where we recognise that we do need to be represented we sometimes subsidise at least partially the fee.

Much more effective is when we are asked by the media for our comments. Very often this is required for an imminent broadcast or publication. We are fortunate that our research officer Ken Sutherland usually has the information at his fingertips and his quick thinking enables a response to be made.

The other good method of getting our message across is in letters to the papers. In the last few months, we seem to have been having more success than usual in being printed; authors to mention are Ken Sutherland again, Jane Anne Liston and Mark Norton. Facts about popular support for rail need to be brought to public attention. You can all help in this.

August of course is the silly season for the media, but it can have an advantage for us in that they do have space in their papers for things which they regard as generally insignificant but which we regard as important. True to form at the start of August this year they found quite a lot of space for articles as well as letters on the subject of a high-speed rail system in the UK. In fact the Guardian printed over 17,000 words in seven days on the subject! Network rail has now put forward its proposals, and the press followed up with business reactions including a quotation from Railfuture Scotland.

"This announcement brings British rail travel into the modern era. It is good news for Scotland's businesses, economy, and rail passengers. A parallel benefit is that it frees up space for rail freight too.

"Scotland will benefit in the long term, but also in the short to medium term too when the first section of the link is built in England.

"That first stretch from London to Birmingham alone will knock an hour off the London to Scotland journey time."

There's still a lot to be discussed, but Network Rail's statement is a positive start.

The biggest stuchie of the season has of course been the GARL fiasco. On September 15 the Transport Scotland conference at the SECC heard John Swinney as the keynote speaker extolling the virtues of all the actions the government was taking in relation to developing transport in Scotland, and in particular heard Alistair Watson explaining how rail developments in the Glasgow area would benefit not only the Commonwealth Games but in the long term the inhabitants of the city. Two days later the budget announced the cancellation of GARL. There has been extensive coverage of the reaction to this, especially in the Herald, from a wide range of individuals and organisations. Glasgow Council and the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce have been vociferous at this snub from the Government.

ernment's vision for the future of transport in Glasgow and the West of Scotland? It remains unclear as to what else is on offer. This must include Crossrail, the long-mooted plan to link the rail systems north and south of the Clyde. This should have been a sister project to GARL, allowing direct access to both Central and Queen Street stations from Glasgow Airport and enhancing connectivity with the rest of Scotland - but it has somehow found its way on to the backburner.

The Commonwealth Games is less than five years away, a once-in-a-generation opportunity to get things right. While the government's commitment to improvements at Dalarnock railway station is welcome, we need to invest further now to reap the benefits and to leave a real transport legacy. That is my focus.

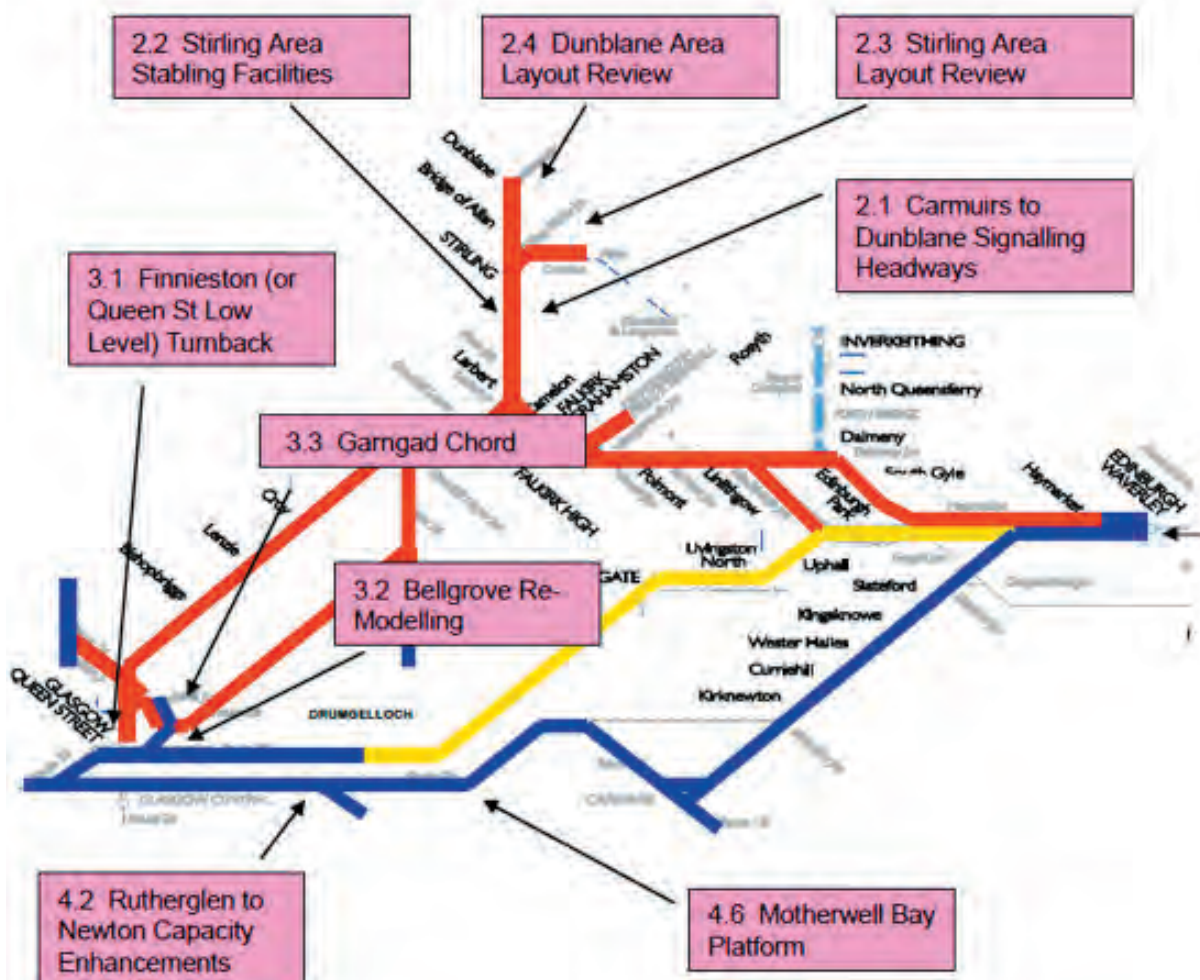
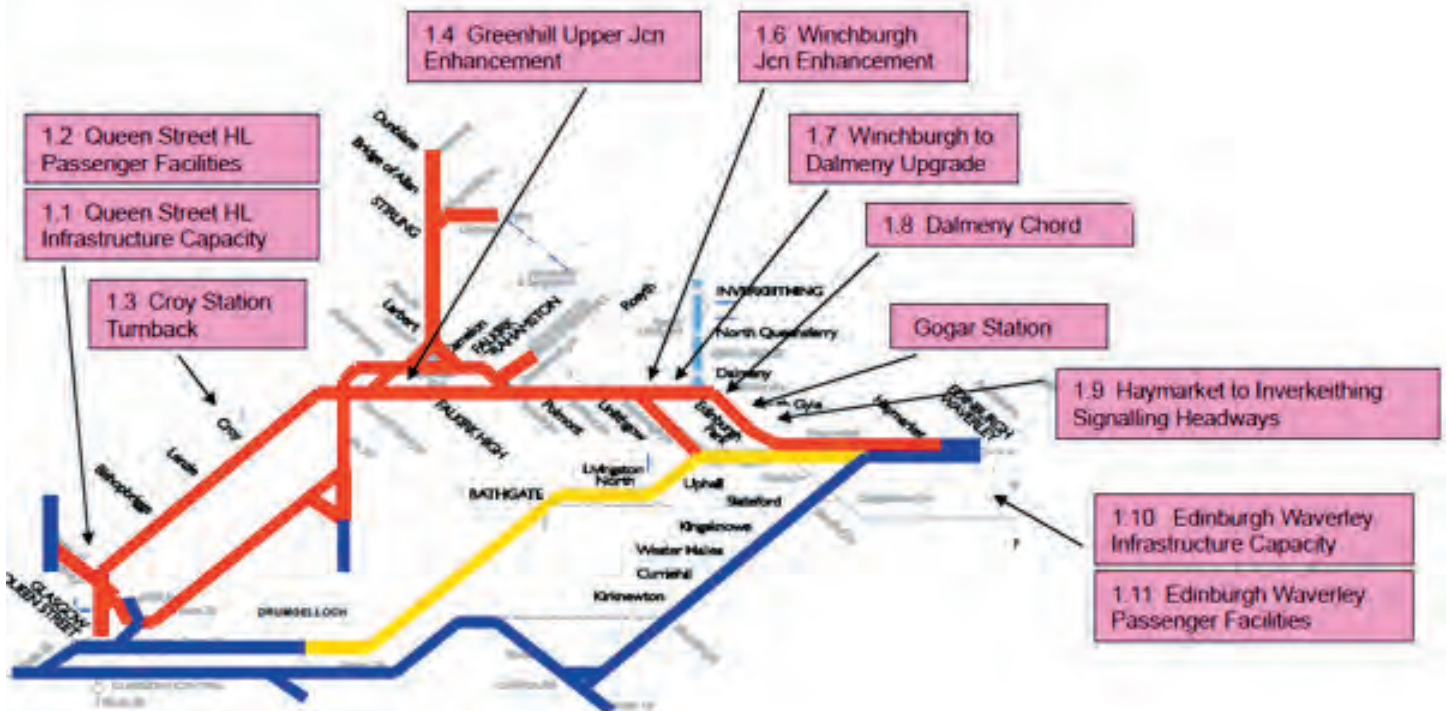
We must have clarity on the commitment that Transport Scotland has in developing transport infrastructure in the Greater Glasgow region. What I and other business leaders would now like to see is a clear and detailed publication of the exact cost over-runs for the project, particularly in reference to the £70m figure being quoted by Transport Scotland for preparatory works, a figure which has been called into question. We need to be told why the GARL budget began at £120m, stood at £200m when it left the auspices of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport and ended up at nearly £400m on the day the project was cancelled.

Scottish rail plans and the EGIP

EGIP comprises around 20 related rail projects that would significantly improve rail links between Edinburgh and Glasgow, increasing service levels to 13 trains an hour in each direction and would include construction of a new rail/tram interchange at Gogar for Edinburgh Airport. A major electrification programme would electrify 350km of diesel routes between and around the two cities, allowing journey times to be reduced to a headline 35 minutes. There would be extensive upgrading of existing track and signalling infrastructure as well as major bridge and tunnel strengthening works.

The current timescales for delivering the programme are:

- 2009 - New hourly service on Shotts line
- 2011 - New interchange station at Gogar
- 2013 - New service on Carstairs line
- 2014 - Cumbernauld line electrified
- 2016 - Dalmeny Chord complete, electrification of E&G and Dunblane complete, new suite of services in operation



HOW ACTUAL RAIL DEMAND FAR EXCEEDS THEORETICAL MODELLING 'FORECASTS'

data collated by Ken Sutherland

Growing experience of new / reopened lines and stations throughout Scotland frequently confirms an upsurge of passenger demand which, in practice, far exceeds the previous pessimistic estimates of usage forecast in the STAG 2 'theoretical modelling' process and used as the basis of investment approval.

Examples

Edinburgh - Bathgate line (1986 reopened):

Trains are now carrying four times as many passengers compared with 'theoretical estimate'. The huge success of this initiative has resulted in further reopening/reconstruction of the 14 mile 'missing link' closed section between Airdrie and Bathgate (as double track / electrified) and due to open 2011.

Prestwick International Airport Rail Station (opened 1994):

Although previous 'estimates' had suggested only 'negligible' use of such an adjacent rail station, Prestwick

International Airport Rail station now carries over 30% of all surface arrivals/departures for this Airport.

Edinburgh Park Station (opened 2004):

Initial 'predictions' had suggested only 500 daily passengers, but by 2005 was actually handling 1,100 passengers daily.

Larkhall - Hamilton / Anniesland - Maryhill Lines (reopened 2005):

By 2008 trains were carrying around 40% more passengers than previously 'predicted'.

Stirling - Alloa (reopened 2008)

Surveys covering the first 12 weeks of this May 2008 reopened line suggested nearly three times more passengers are now using the service compared with the STAG 2 modelling 'forecast estimate'. Around 400,000 passengers per annum now use this new serviced compared to the theoretical 'forecast' of just 155,000 passengers per annum.

Laurencekirk Station (reopened May 2009)

For first six weeks after reopening in May 2009 usage of station was 80% above the predicted level averaging 1,257 passengers per week. If this rate of use continued, it would equal an annual figure of more than 65,000 and far in excess of the initial estimate of 36,000 (From Nestrans [RTP] supplied figures)

Observation and comment

The above examples confirm that far more people are willing to use new or reopened lines and stations, compared to the inadequate 'estimates' suggested by various theoretical 'modelling techniques'. This 'real life experience' confirms a significant desire for a more extensive and accessible rail network than is currently offered and is known as 'suppressed demand'.

Experience of new or improved rail systems (both standard heavy rail or light rail / tram systems) has tended to confirm a much higher degree of 'modal shift' from private car usage (often 20% or more) compared to new/improved bus-based systems (typically only around 5%). However, despite huge public appreciation for new rail route and stations, the artificially low / pessimistic passenger demand 'estimates' still applied by the Scottish/Westminster Government, to new or reopened lines/stations, means that many desirable projects get unfairly rejected at the initial discussion stage as 'unjustified' or 'not worthwhile'.

The 'criteria' used to analyse new rail projects known as the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidelines (STAG) and its Westminster (England/Wales) Government equivalent needs to be radically improved. This is necessary to more accurately reflect the real life experience and actual public usage of new rail links which invariably far exceeds the unsatisfactory 'theoretical estimates', which are still unfairly employed to reject many rail improvement projects, which would otherwise be well used - if they were to be offered !

Visit to Scotland

Simon Norton is a regular contributor to the Railfuture Yahoo group. This is a lightly edited copy of posting he made on 19 October

Having been invited to give a talk in Glasgow I extended my stay to cover some areas I hadn't visited before. This included the last 2 routes on the National Rail network that I've never used.

It also included some bus routes in Lanarkshire, West Lothian and Falkirk, an area that needs to do a lot better in regards to bus information. The route between Blackridge and Caldercruix appears to have disappeared so anyone crossing between east and west that way will have to wait for the railway to reopen.

In Biggar I saw an invitation to sign petitions calling for the reopening of Symington station and for a safe cycle route from Thankerton to Biggar (I think). There was however only one form around and I didn't know which it referred to.

But I think Lanark -- the jumping off point for the New Lanark World Heritage Site -- badly needs a decent link to Carlisle, as well as a better service to Edinburgh.

On the way out I was confronted by restrictions on certain trains between Cambridge and Peterborough which I still don't understand, and which prevented me from using the S&C.

I might have avoided these by getting a bus to St Neots, but it's just as well I didn't as my return journey was heavily delayed by engineering work between Edinburgh and Newcastle and I'd have long missed the last bus from St Neots.

The train from Edinburgh to Newcastle left at 16.05, called Carlisle at 17.25 and arrived Newcastle at 19.04. I'd have thought it could have done the journey from Carlisle quicker than a local train. Inevitably it was held behind the 17.12 ex Carlisle but why couldn't it get to Metrocentre ahead of the 18.48 to Newcastle ?

On the Sunday I was also diverted between Linlithgow and Haymarket. As I wanted to get the 10.25 bus from Edinburgh to Biggar I was put out when the train was 18 minutes late. Fortunately it picked up time en route, and I managed to get from Haymarket to the nearest bus stop quicker than allowed for, and in fact got there 8 minutes early.

The previous day I'd used the Club 55 offer to get from Stirling to Achnasheen and back from Strathcarron, plus a taxibus ride from Achnasheen to Strathcarron round the Applecross peninsula in glorious weather. But I nearly missed it when the train from Stirling was heavily delayed. The 11.01 ex Inverness had to be held for connecting passengers -- I'm glad Scotrail still do this! There were quite a few other passengers making this connection. Long live Club 55 and its users!

Simon Norton

RAGES continues to act as a link between different bodies and people to develop the rail services in East Lothian and the Borders. There are regular meetings which involve East Lothian and Scottish Borders Councils, SEStran, East Lothian and Berwickshire MSPs and the TOCs (First ScotRail and the holder of the ECML franchise) as well as representatives from RAGES. John Lamont, MSP for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, recently reported:

RESTON STATION MOVES TO NEXT STAGE

Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson MSP has committed the Scottish Government to funding the next stage of the re-opening of the Reston Station in Berwickshire. The Minister confirmed that the Scottish Government would fund the Development Study to look at the re-opening of Reston Station together with an hourly service between Edinburgh and Dunbar.

Yesterday, RAGES was involved in the regular meeting hosted and arranged by Cllr Paul McLennan and East Lothian Council. Also present were councillors from both East Lothian and Scottish Borders Councils and SEStran.

All round the table were pleased with the outcome of the recent meeting with the Minister of Transport which had been arranged by our local MSPs.

Particularly of note was the clarification that Transport Scotland will work with First ScotRail to carry out a study, to start before the end of this year, to examine the case for an hourly service between Edinburgh and Dunbar. This study will also consider services from Edinburgh to Berwick with extension to Newcastle and the possibility of new stations at East Linton and Reston. The study will take the form of a business case and should be complete within a year.

At our last meeting it had been feared that the wording of the recent ScotRail Franchise Extension Consultation indicated that this study would not start until December 2010.

Both councillors suggested that the study should include the economic benefits to both council areas and SEStran would inquire about this with Transport Scotland.

Transport Scotland had also indicated that they would consider the case for the suggested 21:30 hrs Monday to Thursday First ScotRail service due to start in December 2010 to be somewhat later to maximise patronage - National Express already run a 21:00 hrs service.

News from the Far North

The press had a bit of a field day at the start of August with the story of the train with no passengers, while the seven passengers were carried by taxi. What of course they didn't do was follow it up with an explanation, which I believe was that the train set was needed in Inverness.

Sorry, there's no conductor ... you'll just have to take a taxi

A train did not pick up any passengers during a four-hour scheduled journey in the north Highlands.

Those waiting to board the early afternoon service from Wick to Inverness were instead told a taxi would be laid on to take them down the A9.

The Sprinter train, with three carriages, made the trip to the Highland capital on Saturday with just the driver and the buffet attendant. The problem was caused by First ScotRail being unable to find a replacement for the conductor who had phoned in sick.



The Highland Wide Local Development Plan includes "improving the rail, air and ferry routes in the area" as a key issue - but seems to give no more detail on any of these three, but unsurprisingly it does say a lot more about roads (dualling etc). Mark Norton (DORLAG) says:

While the draft Plan gives welcome recognition of the issues facing Caithness, the Pentland Firth and the Dounreay closedown issues, and at least superficially recognises the need to upgrade our rail and road links, the transport references are inadequate and need to be seriously emphasised, particularly for our railway. I would please ask all to read the sections carefully (and any others you consider appropriate). Please then make representations to emphasise the recognition in the Plan of the massive importance of major upgrades to the Far North Line, especially the Dornoch Rail Link, Georgemas Chord, Halkirk Station re-opening and other upgrades to the existing line for greater axle loading, capacity and speed increases. It is important that as many people as possible respond.

I would draw your attention to Pages 23-26, concerning the section on Caithness and Sutherland, which culminates in Question 8. I would also draw your attention to Page 60, entitled "Accessibility and Transport", which identified the Far North Line as needing some improvement, and the associated Question 28b.

The deadline for consultation submission is 5 pm (17.00) on November 9th this year.

The report & questionnaire are available at www.railfuturescotland.org.uk/campaigning/HLPQ.pdf and www.railfuturescotland.org.uk/campaigning/HLPQ.pdf



The third Northern item in the news is of course the unfortunate accident at the crossing at Halkirk. The cost of installing barriers at all the open crossings in Scotland is frequently quoted as a justification for delaying action. Compared with the cost of the Forth Replacement Crossing, the AWPR or the M74 extension - it's peanuts! However as the plan to do away with all crossings in the UK (>3000) will take years to execute, some consideration will have to be given to improving safety now. One comment that is frequently made is that the signage is confusing and Ken Sutherland has sent a letter to the transport minister with a suggestion which could overcome this problem (see r.h. column).

Dear Mr Stevenson

A COST EFFECTIVE WAY OF ACHIEVING IMPROVED LEVEL CROSSING SAFETY

Following the tragic outcome of the Tuesday 29th September 2009 collision at Halkirk level crossing, Caithness, you intimated that, your conviction that . . . 'Britain's level crossings are the safest in the World' [and] you were 'determined to avoid accidents like this happening in the future'.

My belief is that a simple safety improvement to the 23 ungated level crossings across Scotland could be achieved by substituting double sets of normal road traffic lights as a more powerful warning message to vehicle drivers.

The first advantage is that standard British road traffic lights are more immediately identified, given respect and overwhelming compliance than is possibly accorded the very infrequent application of 'different and unusual' warning technology at level crossings.

Secondly, and more crucially, road traffic signals give powerful and permanent (24 hour/ 7 day) intimation, that there is a junction and potential conflict ahead. And whether it is safe or unsafe / illegal to proceed by continuously displayed green or red lights. By contrast, especially on low frequency lines, rail crossings give no visible confirmation that it is safe to proceed for most of the time. The absence of any similar continuously visible / recognisable signal-reminder that there will occasionally be high speed conflict at road / rail junctions (as given at major road / road junctions) possibly dulls normal caution in the driver's mind - especially for regular crossing users.

Safety enhancement could be achieved by an advance set of traffic lights at up to 50 metres from the rail crossing. Although of normal head design they would show either green or cautionary 'flashing amber' (similar to pedestrian crossings) but with no red light operational. At the crossing itself, the lights display would be either green or double red, but no amber (for avoidance of doubt and safeguard against single red bulb failure). Klaxon horns would also reinforce the 'double red' message.

The introduction of modified but easily identifiable 'traffic lights' at level crossings would deliver more direct understanding and compliance with the law by vehicle drivers compared to the 'unexpected, unfamiliar and abrupt' railway warning technology currently employed.

This is not intended to excuse deliberate unlawful contempt and driver misuse of existing level crossing warning arrangements. But rather that many of the collisions and 'near miss' situations (however this term is defined!) are probably more 'by default' of driving vigilance, which could be more forcefully prodded by recognisable traffic lights.

Hopefully you may find the above observations and suggestions of some constructive assistance in your discussions with Network Rail. And worth pursuing as an eminently practical, cost-effective safety improvement in the many situations where crossing barriers or total road / rail bridge segregation is unlikely.

Yours faithfully

K A Sutherland

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