

Spring Meeting & Branch AGM

Sat 2nd April at 14:00

Fairway Hotel, Edinburgh Road, Bathgate

“The way we are - a jaundiced look at the state of things”

Speaker: Gordon Casely

Programme:

- Talk
- Questions to the speaker
- Coffee/Tea break
- Branch AGM - a chance for members to vote for office-bearers, ask questions, and to provide guidance to the Committee for policy and activity for the future

AGM:

- Minutes of 2010 AGM & financial statement available on-line at www.railfuturescotland.org.uk
- Report on activities during 2010
- Appointment of office-bearers & Committee
- Volunteers for the Committee or to do active campaigning are sought

Note:

- The hotel is opposite Bathgate station. It is noted for good food. Members of the committee normally meet for lunch before the meeting (about 1200-1230) so why not come early and join us for a chat over lunch? (www.fairwayhotel.biz)
- Gordon Casely is well-known as a lively and outspoken critic on rail matters. His presence should give us a welcome change from some of the more ‘technical’ presentations we have had recently.
- Please support Railfuture by making an effort to attend

St Andrews in the news

– not just the royal wedding

Starlink has commissioned a study from Howard Pack and colleagues with financial support from Railfuture Scotland (using some of the money from the Frank Neville bequest we received last year) and others. We received an informal interim report at the end of February. Howard said:

We have virtually completed the route optimisation.

We have made quite a few alterations to the programme; in particular we have revised it to keep the railway line above the 5m contour which we have been advised is the sea level flood line in the St Andrews area. The results look good. I have one more tweak to make at the town end to get the line into the old station site.

When this is complete we will turn our attention to running the cost side of the programme. We have now to put in the U.K. base costs and churn the figures out.

At each stage of the work I am checking the output as this is a complex project.

Rita O'Neill has now started working on the demand study. We will supply her with a train running time analysis and draft timetable soon so she can complete this.

We are about 75% complete. My feeling is that it will take 6 to 8 weeks to pull it all together and present the results to you in a comprehensive report.

Manifesto

Railfuture Scotland has produced these points, requesting that you should put them to prospective candidates in your constituency.

It's best if you can use your own words, but a simple introduction followed by quoting the points is still good.

- 1 **MAINTAIN MOMENTUM** Devolution has brought many improvements to the rail system in Scotland. This momentum must be maintained during the forthcoming Parliamentary session.
- 2 **INTEGRATION** We need to have strong regional public transport authorities with good leadership and a firm commitment to co-ordinate all public transport. Ideally most travellers should be able to reach railway stations without using a car at any stage in the journey.
- 3 **FARES** Rail fares are too high and are becoming disproportionately more expensive as each year passes. A national railcard should be introduced to redress this and avoid the danger of the cost of rail fares becoming a barrier to rail travel.
- 4 **SPEED VERSUS SERVICE** There seems to be a growing emphasis on some routes to aim for the speeding up end to end journeys to the detriment of some intermediate locations. This philosophy also manifests itself in an apparent reluctance to commit to some obvious new stations. There is a need to balance local access needs with competitive speeds for longer distance services.
- 5 **FREIGHT BY RAIL** The Scottish Government should be a supporter of freight movement by rail. The ability of companies to apply for rail freight facilities grants should be restored immediately on commencement of the new Parliament.

You can download a Word copy of this from www.railfuturescotland.org.uk/resources/

Highland Council's blind eye

Many Railfuture members will have been supporting Dorlag and be aware of the latest threat, but for those who may not follow it closely, Mark Norton wrote to members of Dorlag in December asking for letters of objection by early December, as Highland Council had announced its intention to exclude all reference to major upgrades to the far North Line (including the Dornoch Rail Link route) in their finalised version of the Highland Wide Local Development Plan. He wrote:

This is despite previous discussions and many representations to Highland Council which have outlined the significant transport and social, economic and environmental benefits to the north Highland mainland and Orkney from a 45 minute faster / 26 miles shorter Dornoch Rail link improvement of the current slow and extremely slow Caithness - East Sutherland - Inverness rail line. It remains the key link to achieving a more economic, efficient, competitive and better used North Highland Line - for both passengers and freight. Some small 'minor line improvements' as suggested by Highland Council, will not, of themselves, make any significant difference to this rail route which fails to meet 21st century travel needs and expectations.

PAPER COPY?

If you received this as a paper copy, in the post, it means that we do not have an email address for you. You could save the Society money, and the Secretary a lot of work, if you provided an email address if you have one. It would be used only to deliver an electronic copy of Branch Notes, and occasionally notify you of events or campaign actions.

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

BEFORE

RELEASE For use: 00:01 Tuesday 1st February 2010

BENEFITS ACROSS SCOTLAND FOR SAVING CRITICAL RAIL FREIGHT FUND: Groups call for MSPs to defend Freight Facilities Grants in final Budget debates Transform Scotland and the Rail Freight Group have today (Tuesday 1st) set out the locations throughout Scotland which would benefit from the retention of the Freight Facilities Grants scheme in the final version of the Scottish Budget 2011-12. The groups have issued an appeal to all Members of the Scottish Parliament to save the FFG scheme ahead of the final discussions and debate on the Scottish Budget. The briefing, available at <<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?Itemid=332>>, sets out a number of companies which could benefit from retention of the FFGs, including:

- Highland Spring (Blackford)
- Ailsa Horizons (Girvan)
- Russell (North Highlands)
- BSW Sawmills (Corpach)
- Diageo (Leven)
- Chapel / Newmains (South Lanarkshire)

The briefing also identifies a number of future potential locations across Scotland:

- Alloa (whisky)
- Bathgate (national distribution)
- Dundee (one of the largest British cities with no rail freight facilities)
- Elgin / Keith (whisky)
- Borders (waste and timber)

David Spaven, Scottish Representative of the Rail Freight Group, said:

"The availability of FFG capital grant has been critical to the vast majority of the switch from road to rail in the non-coal market in Scotland in recent decades. It has also secured significant mode switch from road to sea, e.g. for timber on the west coast. FFG has allowed 33 million lorry miles to be taken off Scottish roads annually since 1997, and supports economic development through providing a safe, sustainable and resilient alternative to road haulage."

Colin Howden, Director of Transform Scotland, said:

"In last week's debate on the Budget, John Swinney indicated that he was looking at options to protect funding for transferring freight from road to rail. So we're waiting to see what the Cabinet Secretary will announce in the final round of discussions on the Budget."

"We're suggesting the FFG be retained at around £5m per annum. In the past week alone, the Government has made announcements that it is ready to spend over £50m on dualling the A90 and up to £2,300m building an unnecessary second Forth road bridge. So it is clear that there is no shortage of funds available to invest in transport. The question is whether the Scottish Government is prepared to support sustainable measures like the FFG scheme - or whether it will continue to prioritise subsidising road use."

source: Transform Scotlad press release



Painter turns his talents to West Highland Line

An award-winning Scottish landscape painter is to turn his talents on the scenic West Highland Line.

The working title of Leo's new book is Scotland's Railway Landscapes.

Railway works can be seen on his website at www.leodufeu.co.uk - and some originals are still available to purchase.

The paintings by Linlithgow-based **Leo du Feu** will feature in a forthcoming book about Scottish landscapes which are accessible by rail.

They are also likely to feature in future exhibitions, following the success of earlier works which cover the Aberdeen-Inverness and Ayr-Stranraer lines. His new paintings on the West Highland Line coincide with it being voted for the third year in a row as the "World's Best Rail Journey" by Wanderlust magazine, the traveller's bible.

Train operator ScotRail has agreed to sponsor Leo with travel on the West Highland Line to develop his paintings of some of Scotland's most majes-

AFTER

NEWS RELEASE For immediate use: Wednesday 9th February 2011

RAIL USERS WELCOME REPRIEVE OF FREIGHT GRANT IN SCOTTISH BUDGET: tens of thousands of lorries can now be removed from Scotland's roads.

The Rail Freight Group today welcomed the Scottish Government's decision to reprove the threatened Freight Facilities Grant scheme, which has taken 33 million lorry miles off Scottish roads since 1997. The group, which represents users and suppliers of rail freight services throughout Britain, said the decision taken today to retain the scheme in the new Scottish Budget will be "good for the environment and good for Scotland's economy". RFG Scottish Representative, David Spaven, commented:

"This is a great decision, and is tribute to the cross-party support for retaining an unsung but very successful scheme. I would like to give thanks to the Scottish Government and to all others involved, including the Parliament's Transport, Infrastructure & Climate Change Committee, and to Cathy Jamieson MSP for leading the helpful debate on FFG in Parliament on 13th January."

"Keeping Freight Facilities Grants will allow new rail schemes to take tens of thousands of heavy lorries off Scottish roads every year. It will mean not only relief for communities the length and breadth of Scotland - including the Highlands, Perthshire, Fife, Lanarkshire and South Ayrshire - but also support for economic development through providing a safe, sustainable and resilient alternative to road haulage."

source: Transform Scotlad press release



Tuesday 5th April 2011 19:30 pre-election hustings

In association with Transform Scotland, the Scottish Association for Public Transport, Railfuture Scotland, the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport Scottish Branch and the Light Rail Transit Association Edinburgh Area

Those coming along to represent their political parties are:

- Scott Douglas - Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party
- Alex Cole-Hamilton - Scottish Liberal Democrat Party
- Shirley-Anne Somerville - Scottish National Party
- Charlie Gordon - Scottish Labour Party
- Alison Johnstone - Scottish Green Party

Professor George Hazel OBE will be the Chair

The format of the evening will be as in the BBC's "Question Time"

Railfuture members welcome to this meeting. Currently it is scheduled to be in the Friends Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh, but the room may not be large enough. Please check venue (www.capitalrail.org.uk or www.railfuturescotland.org.uk or 0131 448 0930) nearer the date.

tic views. Leo said: "I am grateful for this sponsorship because I want to highlight the ease with which many of Scotland's beautiful and often remote landscapes can be explored by rail." Theresa Gault, ScotRail's sponsorship and events manager, said: "Leo's paintings provide refreshing images which we believe can help introduce our most scenic routes to a new generation of travellers."

His Aberdeen-Inverness works were exhibited at Elgin to mark its 150th anniversary in 2008. His Ayr-Stranraer works last year coincided with the 150th anniversary of the line reaching Girvan.

Winner of an Alexander Graham Munro Travel Award 2008, Leo received a Royal Over-Seas League Arts Commonwealth Travel scholarship which he used to travel across Canada last year, mainly by rail. His works feature in a limited edition book "Sketches from Canada".

RAILFUTURE CALLS FOR HS2 ROUTE RETHINK – CAPACITY NOT SPEED

Rail campaign group Railfuture has weighed in to the debate about high speed rail. Director Ian McDonald said: “We’re pleased that the Government is pushing ahead with planning a High Speed Rail route from London to the West Midlands. We know that budgets are tight, but there is a pressing need for increased capacity on the railways. We need to meet increasing demand for moving people and goods efficiently, and rail is the only way we can do this while keeping our carbon emissions down, and not by building new motorways and airport expansion.

“However the new line must be part of a planned integrated network, and be connected to existing city centre stations, with through trains able to run to destinations beyond the new route itself, including continental Europe. We welcome the intention to create a network to serve the north west, north east, and Scotland, but this masterplan should include all UK regions and be determined in detail now, not after the completion of the first stage from London to the West Midlands.

“We urge full and thorough consultation on a much wider choice of routes for the first stage. Unfortunately the route chosen is controversial and would pass through an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB). This choice is driven by the idea that the line should run close to Heathrow, but will not actually get there! The proposed interchange at Old Oak Common (West London) will be unattractive for air passengers, if the intention is to persuade them not to travel by car or taxi.

“There are other more direct routes to Birmingham and the north which should be examined in more detail, including options following existing transport corridors such as the M1, West Coast Main Line and Midland Main Line, which would have much less adverse impact on the countryside, and need less tunnelling. It is expensive, unnecessary, and environmentally destructive to plan a route for train speeds up to 400 km/h, when no other country has lines equipped for speeds of more than 320 km/h, and very few above 300 km/h. A separate link should serve Heathrow instead.

“Railfuture has said it will respond to the consultation paper in full. We remain firm that this project is highly desirable, but it must not displace other railway investment, including electrification schemes, more and longer trains, and new stations.”

source: Railfuture press release. Dec 2010

Airdrie-Bathgate pictures

Hundreds of detailed pictures of Bathgate, old and new, on the ‘Railbrit’ website. Some thumbnails below.

<http://www.railbrit.co.uk/location.php?loc=Edinburgh%20and%20Bathgate%20Railway>



Key points from Branch Representatives’ Meeting (November 2010)

Two reps from Scotland attended this - Donald MacPhee and Allison Cosgrove. The meeting was deemed to have been useful, and it is intended to make it an annual event, usually tied in with another conference to reduce travel problems.

There were six key points to come out of the Branch Representatives Meeting on November 14th. These were circulated to each branch, but it’s useful for all members to know how Railfuture is developing..

- 1 Enhancements to website including more direct input from approved officers. This process has already started.
- 2 Enhanced Branch newsletters. While much of our communication is electronic, there is still a need for a regular hard copy newsletter. If some Branches do not have sufficient time and personnel to do this, two Branches may like to produce a joint newsletter. There are precedents for this.
- 3 We could offer ourselves as consultants, both nationally and at Branch level. This could be in a very simple form. For example, the experience of the East Anglian Branch in station footfall surveys could be developed and adopted elsewhere. The South Wales Branch also has some similar experience. If a TOC, or another body such as a local council, has no staff to do such work, we can offer to do it for expenses and a modest fee.
- 4 Specialist member liaison needs to be developed more. 20 years ago we had a student liaison officer, for example. That post could be resurrected. Liaison with family members could also be developed. This can help gain new members.
- 5 RUS submissions are a key part of Branch work and specialist committees can also advise and help. It is important to start work early and to sing from the same hymn sheet. Yesterday’s Board meeting in fact had considerable discussion of this matter in preparation for the next five RUS consultations and you will be hearing more. RUS submissions should also be reported in Railwatch.
- 6 As well as the (under-used) skills and qualifications database, we also need an “Action List” This could be an appendix to the existing skills database or a separate one. It should include members willing to write letters/send e-mails in support of local and/or national campaigns. Sometimes the Freight Committee would like individual Railfuture members to write in support of particular projects. There will also be occasions when we want members to write to their local councillors, Members of Parliament or Members of the European Parliament, in an individual capacity. Such a list would also be valuable for Branch officers. It could be started by sending out a questionnaire with the March Railwatch.

Railfuture is Britain’s only completely independent voice on railway development. We are not affiliated to or sponsored by any political party, trade union, or private industry. We are funded almost entirely by our members. Rail is a vital part of an integrated efficient transport system serving a modern, vibrant, environmentally sustainable economy. We are pro-rail but not anti-road. Railfuture maintains that investment in rail travel and rail freight is vital to the future of the UK economy and environment.

AIRDRIE - BATHGATE

12th DECEMBER 2010



formal opening of Bathgate station - October 2010

We were all looking forward to the completion and re-opening of the Airdrie-Bathgate route, and several groups of cyclists had planned to mark the opening of the replacement cycle route on the same day. In the end, the only winner was the weather. Ralph Barker was there, and on the evening of the opening day sent this report.

I was unable to find details, including on internet, about the first day of service of the re-opened Airdrie Bathgate Line on Sunday 12th December. But following on some very difficult winter weather which had suspended Bathgate services for 2 weeks and Airdrie services for a couple of days, I turned up anyway at Blackridge station as I used to live in Blackridge. As it happened, of the new intermediate stations, only Blackridge had been able to open. The others remained closed due to bad weather preventing completion of car park and pedestrian route surfaces. A lot of work was continuing at all these station sites. Thick snow and ice, on public roads and footpaths as well as station areas, was still a serious problem, especially at Caldercruix.

Trains were running, hourly or so in the morning, changing to half hourly after midday. They will revert to hourly on weekdays

because of the widely publicised shortage of trains.

I was able to get my first day tickets to all new stations. The on-train ticket examiner understood what I was after and joined in the enthusiasm. I might not have been first on the train but was told I was the first to use the new service at Armadale and Caldercruix by using the replacement bus service and reports later had it that nobody used these incomplete (and un-opened) stations except myself. The replacement bus was far from perfect, it had to stick to the main A89 road except at Blackridge station (road conditions were still bad and there was little alternative), neither could they sell tickets. By 13.00 I was still being told I was the only user.

The trains were running full of through passengers. I wondered how they knew there would be through train for them? Apart from enthusiasts, very few passengers were using Blackridge station and it was obvious how badly and even maliciously badly sited the station is.

The actual journey on the train was simply fantastic.

Ralph

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