



Teachdail Rèile na h-Alba

Dear Members,

There is a great deal of news, both local and national, to catch up on in this issue. Please also check www.railfuture.org.uk for the latest press releases and information on campaigns.

We have been unable to have a face-to-face meeting with members for quite a long time. However, we have had two Zoom meetings with members, the last one on the proposed changes to the Scotrail timetable from Scott Prentice (covered on pages 3 & 4). We hope to resume meetings in the spring, with a belated AGM.

Meanwhile...for any members in the North East, we fully expect to have a stall at Aberdeen Model Rail Show at the former Hallmark Hotel, Farburn Terrace, Dyce, from 30-31 October. Please pop by and chat to us, it's a long time since we've seen any of you!

Allison Cosgrove, Chair

NATIONAL NEWS

NEW SERVICES FROM NEWCASTLE-EDINBURGH

TransPennine Express will shortly be launching a new stopping service between Newcastle and Edinburgh, or 5 trains each way per day. Calls will be Morpeth, Alnmouth, Berwick, the new station at Reston (scheduled to open late 2021/early 2022) and Dunbar. The new station at East Linton will also benefit once constructed. This will add connectivity between Edinburgh, Dunbar and the northern towns to Newcastle, and is very much to be welcomed.



A TPE Nova Pic : Railway Gazette

EAST COAST MAINLINE TIMETABLE CHANGES POSTPONED UNTIL MAY 2023

The recent consultation on the proposals to change the East Coast Main Line Timetable met with fierce opposition up and down the ECML. Railfuture Passenger Group responded vigorously to these changes and the authors of an extremely detailed response, Neil Middleton and Andrew Dyson, singled out Scotland in part of the response, by stating:

"we believe the substantial reduction in LNER trains serving Morpeth, Alnmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Dunbar will cause unnecessary hardship through loss of direct services to/from key destinations south of Newcastle. The withdrawal of the well-used Dunbar and Berwick-upon-Tweed stops in an evening peak service from Edinburgh will cause particular hardship. The introduction of infrequent services by open-access operator East Coast Trains does not address these service reductions."

Dunbar in particular was scheduled to lose 13 Cross Country services a day and two Trans Pennine services, which are currently suspended due to Covid. As Dunbar is a rapidly expanding town, with increasing housebuilding, this created an immediate response, and the local MSP, Paul McLennan, reported that he had had hundreds of responses from local people and businesses.

A good result that the changes are at least postponed for another year, and Railfuture will be on the lookout for any future proposals. For further information, see the press release on railfuture.org.

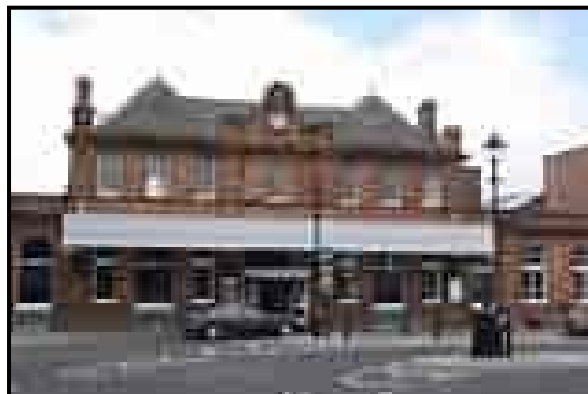
NATIONAL NEWS (continued)

CONSULTATION ON REDUCTION IN TICKET OFFICE HOURS

Transport Focus recently launched a consultation on proposals by LNER to reduce ticket office opening hours at their stations. The station most affected was Berwick-on-Tweed, used by many passengers in the Scottish Borders to travel south, and it was proposed to cut 43 hours per week from the ticket office opening times.

Allison Cosgrove, Chair, Railfuture Scotland said:

"This consultation is deeply flawed as LNER are only using information on who actually books tickets online and disregards the many other queries that ticket office staff deal with. On a recent visit to Berwick, four people in 15 minutes came to the ticket office with queries, some quite complicated, which could not possibly have been dealt with by a ticket machine. In addition, the geographic location of Berwick Station, where the booking hall is separated from the platform staff by the ECML, means that anyone turning up at the station may not see any staff at all if they are working on the platform, and thus no help would be available"

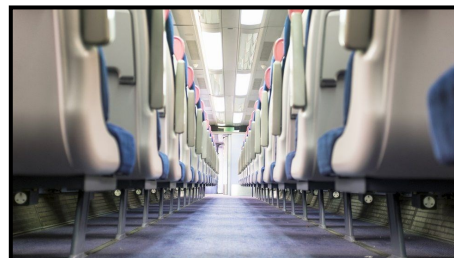


Berwick-on-Tweed Station : Kevin Boyd Flickr

More than a quarter of the responses to the consultation related to Berwick Station, and although many other stations south of Berwick would be affected by the changes, none of the proposals was as extensive.

COMPULSORY SEAT RESERVATIONS

During the travel restrictions surrounding COVID, compulsory seat reservations were put in place to ensure that trains were not overcrowded. However, once rules were relaxed, LNER proposed to continue these restrictions, which would have made the principle of a "walk-up" railway a thing of the past.



After representation to LNER, it has been agreed that there will always be two coaches available for unrestricted access.



RAILFUTURE LOTTERY

Are you feeling lucky? Railfuture members can take part in their very own Members Lottery. For an annual cost of £12, you can have a monthly entry into the Draw, with a first prize of £40 and five smaller prizes.

More details from: <https://railfuture.org.uk/lottery/> or email lottery@railfuture.org.uk.

SCOTTISH NEWS

CHANGES TO SCOTRAIL TIMETABLE

On 11th September, Scott Prentice from Scotrail gave us a comprehensive assessment of the routes in Scotland which would be most affected by proposed cutbacks in the timetable. His presentation focused on an analysis of seat usage on routes around Scotland. Three routes were exempt from any changes, the West Highland Line, the Kyle Line and the Far North Line, as these were seen as lifeline services. Changes were largely in Fife, the Central Belt and the West of Scotland and Jane Ann Liston, our Secretary, submitted a response to the proposals, as follows:

The need to reduce the use of fossil-fuels in transport is by now universally known. Rail has the dual advantage of being the most environmentally-friendly way to transport large numbers of people and proven to be attractive to motorists, resulting in a switch from private cars.

Until Covid, rail was also growing in popularity, carrying more passengers than in the 1920s, on a network just a third of the size.

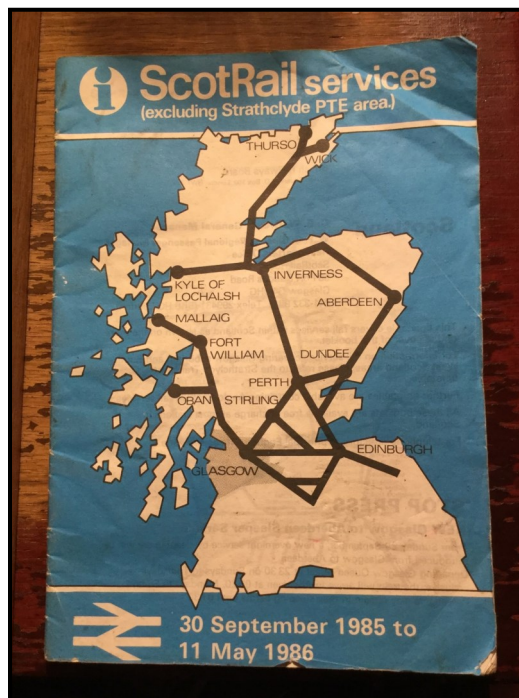
That being so it is difficult to comprehend why Scotrail proposes to make rail travel less attractive by cutting services and significantly lengthening some journey times.

Few will doubt the claim that there will be a change in commuting patterns. However, with many workers still working from home and not yet knowing what their working week will look like once they are back in the office, it is not clear how Scotrail can be anything like certain that their proposals will fit the requirements of potential passengers.

For instance, in his report published in March, Ian Docherty identifies Fife-Glasgow and Edinburgh-Ayrshire as commuter routes which could see an increase in patronage. And yet Scotrail proposes to:

- Withdraw the direct Kirkcaldy-Glasgow service
- Reduce the frequency of Edinburgh-Glasgow Queen Street express trains outwith peak hour
- Withdraw the semi-fast Edinburgh-Shotts-Glasgow Central trains outwith peak hours

With the refusal of Transport Scotland to build just 1.8 miles of track and a station at Glasgow Cross, this last was the nearest there was to Glasgow Crossrail because with a journey between Edinburgh and Central taking around the same time



Some of the proposed journey times are longer than those in this 1985-86 timetable

as travelling to Queen Street on the express and transferring to Central, it was attractive to Ayrshire-bound passengers. Yet this cut, plus the halving of the off-peak Edinburgh-Glasgow express, will make the journey considerably longer with 18 or 19 intermediate stops and thus much less attractive for commuters travelling outwith the traditional peak times – and we know working patterns do not always fit conveniently into these – as well as messing up connections for leisure travellers, even although it is admitted that leisure, or ‘discretionary’ rail travel is taking up a greater share of journeys and indeed is likely to increase. One might ask what was the point of electrifying the Shotts line when it will now be used only by very slow trains?

It has been said that increasing the journey times between Edinburgh and Perth by routing the trains via Cowdenbeath is putting the clock back several decades. And when a Scotrail manager publicly admits that, yes, the train journey will take so much longer that one would be better driving between Perth and Edinburgh, one has to ask what is going on?

Similarly in Fife, where travel time between Edinburgh and Ladybank and especially Edinburgh and Cupar have been increased by 13-17 minutes, with journeys taking longer than they did in 1985! Leuchars fortunately still has the fast trains from Aberdeen to Edinburgh, though it is not clear that restrictions on the Tay Bridge still require the train

SCOTTISH NEWS (continued)

originating from Inverness, which leaves Dundee at 08:24, to whizz through Leuchars without stopping, leaving Leuchars with only 2 peak time trains an hour apart, each taking over an hour and a quarter to reach Edinburgh Waverley.

It is generally accepted that introducing a change of trains during a journey results in a loss of 20% of passengers. We can therefore expect to see a reduction in usage on journeys such as Kirkcaldy-Perth or where the breaking of the Fife Circle necessitates a change at Inverkeithing or Markinch solely because of this inconvenience. It should also be noted that many Fife stations are either wholly unstaffed or only open for a few hours in the mornings. This will present real difficulties with passengers who require assistance to change trains. Hitherto they have been able to travel right round on the one train but woe betide them should they have to change at a station when it is unstaffed.

Elsewhere in the network already sparse services have been made even sparser, such as Carlisle/Carstairs-Edinburgh services being reduced from 5 to 3 daily return journeys. Is this likely to attract passengers back?

It is not at all clear why Abellio is preparing a timetable which it is destined never to operate, because by May 2022 the Scottish Government will already have been running the railway for 6 weeks. That being so, is a programme of reduced services, enforced changes and longer journey times really likely to attract passengers, already wary of public transport because of the repeated pandemic message that it is dangerous, back to the railway? The real fear is that many will be deterred from using the train at all and go back to driving.

Back in the 1960s-1980s, exemplified by the notorious Beeching and Serpell reports, it seemed to be believed that cutting services, sometimes whole lines and thus reducing the opportunities people had to actually use the railway, would make them pay their way. As is well known it didn't work, yet while not actually advocating wholesale closure of stations and lines, the proposed Scotrail timetable again gives passengers fewer chances to use the service. What should have been an opportunity, with improved connections at Motherwell, investment in the likes of Allander and Lanark, re-openings at Clackmannan, Kincardine and Longannet (Talgo), preparations for a station at

Newburgh, a sensibly-priced Glasgow Crossrail without vastly-expensive sub-river tunnelling, and progress towards expansion of the network such as extending the Longannet line to Dunfermline, taking the Borders service from Tweedbank to at least Hawick with the intention of eventually reaching Carlisle, even building a new line to St Andrews, constructing the Dornoch bridge and restoring the Dumfries-Stranraer line with an extension to Cairnryan, is in danger of being squandered with a retreat in some cases to the level of service of 40 years ago resulting in potential and current passengers being pushed back into private cars. Nobody gains by that.

We hope, as requested, all members were able to respond to the consultation within the timescale.

REBUILDING RESTON STATION...



John Lamont MP visiting the Team at Reston : Northumberland Gazette

Work on Reston Station site started on 4 January 2021 and has continued at a great rate, with the bridge and lifts craned into position early in October and other works ongoing.

Full details of progress can be found at <https://scotlandsrailway.com/projects/reston-station> and the RAGES Facebook site has weekly pictures.

...and EAST LINTON

East Linton was the second station re-opening that was a focus for Rail Action Group East of Scotland (RAGES). Planning permission



Proposed Station site at East Linton : Scotrail

was granted for the new station in September and construction is expected to start once the BAM Nuttall Team finish at Reston, with re-opening in 2023-24. Further information will be available when construction begins on the RAGES website and Facebook pages.

LEVENMOUTH

Preparatory work has now started on the site, and progress updates can be found at <https://scotlandsrailway.com/projects/levenmouth-reconnected-raillink/> with trains expected to run by 2023. More details on <https://levenmouth.co.uk>.