

## EDITORIAL

*The mills of God grind slowly - and so does the Scottish Parliament, but eventually there is a product. We do wonder however why anything which involves metal track requires so much investigation (how many man-hours of Scottish parliamentary time have been spent on rail and tram bills?) while tons of tarmac can be literally steamrollered into place with little formality. Anyway the good news is that the first stage of Edinburgh's Tramlines 1 & 2 have passed the first stage. Meanwhile no more news from Parliament about heavy rail - things are progressing slowly, but there are some bits of good news.*

## FEBRUARY LAUNCHES

### First ScotRail Journey Check

First ScotRail launched "Journey Check" early on 15th February. This gives real-time information on unscheduled problems as well as predicted ones. The big advantage is that it's not only available via the internet, but also on PDAs and from April 2005 by text messaging. JourneyCheck provides customer with the following:

- \* A summary of train service problems
- \* Detailed messages about service disruption
- \* Current and future engineering works
- \* Route service disruptions
- \* Integrated Station Departure Boards
- \* Ability to personalise information by selecting 'from' and 'to' for single journeys
- \* Ability to filter all information including the entries on the departure board about services that go between locations

Mary Dickson, Managing Director, First ScotRail said: "We have listened to our customers and market research results rank advance information as one of the top three improvements requested by urban and leisure customers. This is a fantastic service and customers will reap the benefits of using a truly integrated instant information service."

### First ScotRail Cycle Rescue

The ETA (Environmental Transport Association) is a body which promotes sustainable transport, but recognising that cars are a necessity provides rescue services to the same standards as the AA and RAC but doesn't promote road development. It also offers members a Cycle Rescue programme. I've used this - when I had an accident between Peebles and Selkirk which injured my knee and my bike and I were returned to Edinburgh by a local garage). Recently CTC members have been able to subscribe to just the cycle rescue. Now First ScotRail are providing the cycle rescue for anyone who has a valid ScotRail ticket and is unable to complete the cycle part of their journey due to breakdown, vandalism .... This service was launched in 16th February - two First ScotRail launches in one week!



To counter this, ScotRail was severely criticised in the Scotsman for its worsening punctuality figures (see elsewhere).

### NEW IMPROVED TIMETABLE FOR DUNBAR FROM JUNE 2005

*(Joint announcement by GNER and Virgin CrossCountry 15th Feb)*

GNER and Virgin CrossCountry are delighted to advise that, following consultation with the Scottish Executive, Strategic Rail Authority and stakeholders, a new improved timetable for Dunbar will be introduced on 12 June 2005.

You will be aware that Dunbar is currently served solely by GNER services on a relatively ad-hoc basis and whilst the level of service is above the Public Service Requirement (PSR), the timetable has remained unchanged for a number of years.

The present service does not reflect the growing potential market for rail in East Lothian and the planned increase in housing, in and around Dunbar. We have received many representations seeking improved services.

From June, Dunbar, will gain more frequent services to and from Edinburgh with trains at regular intervals throughout the day. This boost to the Dunbar/Edinburgh timetable will be particularly important as 92 per cent of people using Dunbar station are travelling to, from or via Edinburgh.

The timetable retains the morning direct service to London and late afternoon service from London and there will be more London journey opportunities (with changes at Newcastle or York) including later weekend departures from London. Whilst there is a reduction in direct London services (five each day), there will be a wider range of new destinations in England including Birmingham, Oxford, Southampton and Bournemouth provided by Virgin CrossCountry.

Most of the calls by Virgin CrossCountry will be additional trains for Dunbar, plugging gaps in the existing timetable. Some others will substitute for stops currently made by GNER at about the same times.



**AGM & SPRING MEETING – APRIL 16th at 14:00**  
Jury's Inn, Jeffrey Street, Edinburgh – full details on page 2

## RAGES - good news

*in addition to the GNER/Virgin Dunbar announcement -*

Nov 23

Rail Action Group East of Scotland reports that South of Scotland MSP David Mundell lodged the following motion at the Scottish Parliament: "That the Parliament congratulates Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES) for its work in campaigning for improved rail services on the East Coast mainline; pledges its support for the re-opening of stations on the line at Reston and East Linton; further supports the development of local rail services between Edinburgh, Dunbar and Berwick, and calls on the Scottish Executive to work with Scottish Borders Council, Network Rail and other stakeholders to bring forward proposals which will achieve these objectives."

Jan 11

Rail Action Group East of Scotland (RAGES) is pleased that the Scottish Executive have agreed to part-fund the next stage of the process to re-instate the local service between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed, namely a formal appraisal of the project. A joint meeting will take place between Scottish Borders and East Lothian Councils on 20 Jan 2005 to discuss this further. Since then we have heard that some progress was made at that meeting.

## InterCity East Coast worry to Edinburgh & Glasgow Councils

### *Quote from notes of report to Edinburgh Council:*

"There is considerable uncertainty about the future of rail services between Scotland and the rest of the UK as the InterCity rail franchises are re-tendered. Although the Strategic Rail Authority has argued that the new East Coast Main Line franchise will maintain the number of trains between Edinburgh and London as operated at the start of the last franchise in 1996, our calculations suggest otherwise. The new franchise may reduce service levels during Monday to Friday from 21 to 18 trains per day.

"It is a concern that journey times may get longer, when we need the train to be a viable option for business travellers and tourists. Under the new franchise, the previously fastest service of 3 hours 59 minutes will not return and average journey times will be 4 hours and 42 minutes (Editor's italics).

"Edinburgh has enjoyed an excellent East Coast Main Line service in recent years and I would hope that this will continue. We require increased service levels rather than any reduction. I am sure that the four franchise bidders will recognise and accept our arguments which are designed to encourage the numbers of passengers using East Coast Main Line rail services.

"Councillor Charles Gordon, Leader of Glasgow City Council, and I recently sought assurances from the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) that current train frequency levels on the Intercity Cross Country route would not be downgraded. In response to our joint approach, David Quarmby, Chairman, Strategic Rail Authority, helpfully confirmed that existing service levels would be maintained.

"City of Edinburgh Council intend to make continued representations via SESTRAN, the regional transport partnership made up of local authorities in South East Scotland, to argue the case for retention of existing service levels and reductions in journey times."

So the Councils are on the case. At the time of writing this no decision has been made on the ICEC franchise. Once that is made, we may need to lobby the new franchisee on these matters.

## Spring Meeting - Sat 16th April at 14:00

in Jury's Inn, 44 Jeffrey Street, Edinburgh

**Speaker: Iain Docherty**

followed after a short coffee break by

## Branch AGM

### **Agenda:**

- Reports from Office-Bearers (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership)
- General Discussion - a chance for members to ask questions, and to provide guidance to the Committee for policy and activity for the coming year
- Election of Office-Bearers

We do want an active and varied committee, and new volunteers for office or committee membership will be welcomed. Have you considered whether you could bring anything to the Committee?

The speaker for the AGM is Dr. Iain Docherty, a Senior Lecturer at the University of Glasgow - School of Business and Management. Amongst other things Dr. Docherty is an advisor to the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Transport Committee, member of the Commission for Integrated Transport's Expert Academic Panel, member of the Scottish Executive's Transport (Scotland) Review Committee, advisor to The City of Edinburgh Council, Glasgow City Council and Scottish Enterprise.

Mike Crowhurst, Chairman of Railfuture, is likely to be in Scotland during April and is hoping to be able to attend the meeting.

*Jeffrey Street: Leave Waverley Station as if going to Platform 21, continue on bridge out into Market St. Turn left, bear right into Jeffrey Street. It's about 200m from the station door.*

## Laurencekirk Station re-opening set to move closer

On Thursday 10 March Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee is being asked to agree to a detailed engineering study of the costs of re-opening the station, which was closed in 1968, during the Beeching era.

Councillor Alison McInnes, Chair of the Infrastructure Services Committee said, "The Committee is being asked to approve the next stage of project development. The proposal to re-open Laurencekirk Station fits well with the aims and objectives of our Local Transport Strategy, which seeks to deliver a balanced and integrated transport system, which improves accessibility and supports the local economy. Improving the north east's rail infrastructure and creating new rail travel opportunities is also a key element of the Modern Transport System which we are working with our NESTRANS partners to deliver".

The report before this week's Infrastructure Services Committee estimates that a detailed engineering design and costing study of re-opening Laurencekirk Station will cost up to £220,000, of which the Scottish Executive has agreed to fund 80% with the Council funding the remaining 20%, amounting to £44,000.

The earlier STAG assessment of the project estimated the cost of re-opening a two-platform station, including refurbishment of the former station building and provision of a 50-space car park, to be around £3.2 million. This latest study will provide a more robust cost estimate, which can then form the basis of a bid for Scottish Executive funding to deliver the project. It is envisaged that the work will take around 4 - 6 months to complete, with the outcome being reported back to the Committee in August of this year. Assuming a successful bid for project funding at the end of the study, the station could be open by 2007.

## Edinburgh South Suburban Railway

Resolution of Council 11 Nov : "Instructs the Director of City Development to commence discussions with the Scottish Executive with a view to securing the re-introduction of passenger services to the Edinburgh South Suburban Railway."

From Edinburgh Council Minutes 27 Jan 2005

1. On 11th November 2004 the Council agreed to work towards the objective of re-opening the South Suburban railway by the time the Waverley Railway re-opens for passenger use.
2. A meeting to explore the Scottish Executive's position on reopening the Edinburgh South Suburban Railway (ESSR) for passenger services, and possible financial contributions for any scheme took place on Thursday 13 January. This meeting marked the start of a process of discussion with a range of agencies that are essential to completion of the project.
3. The timescale for reintroducing passenger services on the ESSR is largely dependent on funding availability, but is not solely determined by it. For example, more detailed work will be required on timetabling; and, as noted in the report to full Council on 11 November 2004, reappraisal of the role of ESSR to maximise synergy if Tram Line 3 and the Waverley railway also proceed.
4. Should funding become available from Congestion Charging Revenue or other sources, and subject to the necessary work identified in paragraph 3.26 it should be possible to re-introduce passenger services on the ESSR in line with the Council's objective as outlined above.
5. Given the current changes in transport delivery arrangements in Scotland, it is likely that the ESSR would be delivered by the new Scottish Transport Agency rather than the Council.

## Edinburgh Park Station

Reported to Edinburgh Council in December in the Leader's report:

- City of Edinburgh Council was overall winner in the Transport Integration category for Edinburgh Park Station at the Scottish Transport Awards held at the beginning of November. The station, which opened in December 2003, acts as an interchange for trains, buses, pedestrians, cyclists and car drop-off. The station is served by a cross-city bus service and also dedicated complimentary shuttle buses for the adjacent business parks. A new hourly City Growth funded Stagecoach X40 service links the station with the successful Park and Ride facility at Ferrytoll, as well as with Sighthill, Riccarton and Corstorphine.
- Following the addition of Edinburgh Park to the rail network, passenger numbers on Crossrail increased by 50%. First ScotRail has indicated that passenger numbers have continued to increase throughout the year. The Council intends to undertake a further survey of passenger numbers on Edinburgh Crossrail at the beginning of 2005. It is anticipated that this will show that current passenger use has exceeded original projections.

***Railfuture (UK) AGM is in Peterborough on May 7th.***

***When you get the papers, don't forget to use your vote for Council members.***

## Haymarket

To motorists this is just a big gyratory traffic system which will shortly be more snarled up by trams passing through it. To rail passengers it's an important interchange with the majority of trains to and from Waverley calling at it. The railings in the street are always full of bikes used by commuters (only cycle parking for about 10 in the station park), and there are always taxis at the front. Yet only one platform has level access - and even that door is now closed and only available to disabled passengers since the ticket-barriers went in. The steps are steep and crowded and there are no lifts or ramps. It's Scotland 3rd busiest station yet uncomfortably cramped and with poor facilities. The Scottish Executive in January allocated £750,000 to Edinburgh City Council to study ways of improving facilities and the interchange. With the proposed Edinburgh Airport Rail Link and Tramline 2 (now passed its first stage in the Parliamentary process) this becomes a key interchange between transport modes.

## Train services are getting worse

In the same week as the launches reported earlier it was revealed that 1 in 5 of First ScotRail's trains had been late during January. For those commuting into Edinburgh it was even worse - nearly one in three (31%) was late. The weather was blamed for many of these, but users of the service are concerned only with the end result - they don't get to their destinations on time. First will face fines if they don't meet the standards which have been set. Overall reliability was 79% in January 2005 compared to 82% in January 2004. But it is worse than it appears, for not only is arrival within five minutes counted as 'on-time' (which it certainly isn't if your connection is pulling away from one platform as you arrive at another), but on the Glasgow-Edinburgh shuttle 'within 10 minutes' is regarded as 'on time' - so a 20% error is not regarded as significant!

James King, convener of the Rail Passengers' Committee Scotland, accepted First ScotRail was not completely to blame, but added: "Worryingly, despite the record sums being pumped into the rail network infrastructure, problems still account for too many delays. Passengers don't distinguish between which part of the network causes the problems. We call on all Scottish rail partners to work together effectively to improve performance."

"Congestion at Waverley station regularly causes unacceptable delays to passengers - the start of the rebuilding project to add more capacity cannot come soon enough."

"When things go wrong, it is vital that passengers get accurate, up-to-date information. While First ScotRail has made some welcome improvements in this area, there is still a great deal to do."

Gordon Dewar, First ScotRail's commercial director, said: "This has been an extremely disappointing period for the rail industry."

## WCML

During the winter Virgin have been progressing the Pendolino roll-out. Virgin report that many problems can be solved by what computer users know as the 'three-fingered salute' - Ctrl-Alt-Delete, in other words a re-booting of the on-board computer solves a lot of problems. Passengers are blamed for some delays - apparently there is a delay after passengers press the button to open outer doors while the step is rolled out, and some impatient passengers are then operating the emergency button, which of course causes a delay while this is investigated by staff and reset. It's the simple things that cause the problems - obviously no-one thought about how passengers' minds work!

## Severe weather

Floods in the Carlisle area and very high winds throughout Scotland have caused excusable disruptions, though some questioned the decision of ScotRail to shut down on the windiest day. However their decision to check tracks before allowing any traffic was probably more sensible and satisfactory for customers than having them start their journeys and then be stuck part way by an obstruction. On Jan 8th the WCML was closed for scheduled work and the Settle-Carlisle line was flooded! More frustrating was the scheduled work on both East Coast (between Stevenage and Newark) and West Coast (Carlisle to Glasgow) lines at weekends before and after Christmas requiring substitution and extended journey times.

## Keeping Alert

As a campaigning organisation we need to look out for things which can erode the work we are doing.

Now that the Scottish Executive has been handed some money to run the railways in Scotland we hope that they will be more responsive to Scotland's needs. The downside is that they can not only promote and develop rail projects, but they can close down lines. We need to keep watch! Political will is very variable. At the moment rail is Scotland is getting a tremendous push from the government, but there's an election coming up soon, and all sorts of things could change after it.

## A New Year Wake - or a Celebration?

To blow away the New Year cobwebs about 40 enthusiasts went out in the drizzle to walk from Tweedbank to Gala to commemorate the anniversary (6th January 1969) of the closing of the Waverley Line. Despite the weather, there was an air of expectancy in the walkers and in the speeches made in the Town Square in Gala as progress is being made in the promotion of the line.



## Glasgow Crossrail

SPT has commissioned Scott Wilson to produce a feasibility study for the linking of Central and Queen Street stations. £38m is the first estimate of the cost of the scheme.

The Larkhall-Milngavie construction progresses - Ken Sutherland had a photo published in the local Bearsden press recently.

## Growth Rates

In Scotland the route with the biggest growth is Edinburgh-Bathgate with an increase of 71% between 2003 and 2004 - from 747,959 to 1.2m. Imagine if the track were doubled, and it linked in with

## STIRLING ALLOA KINCARDINE RAILWAY - DEVEGETATION WORK

{Report: Monday, January 24}

The Act of the Scottish Parliament necessary to carry out the works received Royal Assent in August 2004 - the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine Railway and Linked Improvements Act 2004. Since that date you may have noticed people working on the route, carrying out inspections, surveys and ground investigation works.

This work is now substantially complete and the Project Delivery Team is gearing up to commence Phase 2 of the project, detailed design and construction, early in 2005. However the current programme being finalised has resulted in the identification of a seasonal constraint due to nesting birds.

In order to minimise the potential disruption to nesting birds it is necessary to remove the trees, shrubs and bushes which have grown up along the disused railway line before March 2005. Work to devegetate the route will therefore start in January once all the necessary land access approvals are in place. If this work does not take place before the birds nest, then the majority of the trees etc. cannot be removed until September without using more costly measures. Not all of the trees will be removed. Only the vegetation that needs to be removed will be cut down. However all broadleaf species, such as chestnut, sycamore and oak, will be removed as their leaves pose a safety risk to the railway when they get on to the line.

An environmental management plan, a health and safety plan and a number of other monitoring measures will be in place to ensure the works are carried out in a safe and sensible manner. Ecological studies have also been carried out to make sure that wildlife along the route is not disturbed by the works. Efforts will also be made to dispose of the wood generated in an environmentally friendly manner.



*Considering that Scotland has had a disproportionately large amount of space in the last two issues of Railwatch, there's no need to report on items which were covered there.*

[www.RailFutureScotland.org.uk](http://www.RailFutureScotland.org.uk)

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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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