



Branch Notes - Autumn 2014

Jane Ann Liston

Nobody can say that Railfuture Scotland lacks vision. Vice-chair Roderick McDougall has produced a list of 50 stations on existing lines which should be opened or re-opened, plus 23 short branches to be constructed which could feed valuable new traffic into the rail network. These proposals will be unveiled at the Autumn Meeting on 15th November in Edinburgh.

Local campaigns

East Lothian & Berwickshire (Rail Action Group, East of Scotland - RAGES)

In recognition of the importance of rail accessibility to the future social and economic well-being of east Berwickshire, Scottish Borders Council has pledged £1.28M towards a new Reston station, while East Lothian has also confirmed that it will contribute financially to a re-opened East Linton. Both new stations have been proposed as part of an improved Edinburgh to Berwick-upon-Tweed local rail service, and have attracted support from all political parties. As the population of East Linton has expanded in recent years, with even more houses currently being built, a re-opened station will be of great benefit to its residents and those of the surrounding area. Reston, around forty miles from the Borders Railway, enjoys support from all local community councils as well as the nearby towns of Eyemouth and Duns. The project would involve unlimited parking space for Park and Ride in East Berwickshire. Together, the new stations would improve the economy of the local area by making it more attractive to investors and tourism, provide access to a far wider jobs market and further education opportunities, and would also reduce the need to travel by road. The decision from the Transport Minister, Keith Brown MSP, is eagerly awaited.

RAGES have had meetings with all five bidders for the new ScotRail franchise, bids for which were also due to be submitted by April 2014. The winner will be notified in October, with the new franchise commencing in April 2015. RAGES have also met First Group, one of the three bidders bidding for the East Coast Franchise due to start in March 2015, and hope to meet the other two bidders as soon as dates can be arranged. In their discussions RAGES are making it clear to the bidders that they want existing long distance and cross country services retained at Dunbar and Berwick-upon-Tweed and also satisfy public demand for a near-midday Edinburgh to London service calling at Dunbar. RAGES has also been in correspondence with the First Minister, though this was limited by the pre-referendum 'purdah' for Ministers. <http://www.rages.org.uk/>

Borders Railway

Construction of the new Borders line is progressing, with services to Galashiels and Tweedbank due to start on 6th September 2015. Steam trains are to be accommodated as are all 143 metres (or 470 feet) of the Great Tapestry of Scotland, the latter at Tweedbank Station. The leader of Scottish Borders Council has declared his support for extending the line to Hawick and Carlisle.

South West Scotland

In recent weeks Beattock Station Action Group has met all Scotrail franchise bidders. They are working with SWESTRAN with a view to undertaking a Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) report and identifying the best way to reopen the station at the earliest opportunity. The e-mail: secretary@railfuturescotland.org.uk

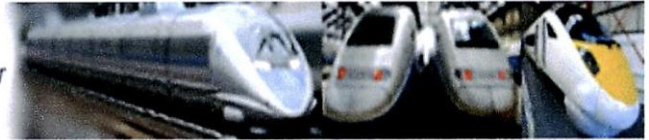
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campaign has attracted backing from local MSPs, the MP and local councillors. In addition the Beattock Station campaign has identified funding from the regional transport partnership SWESTRAN for a STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance) evaluation.

From an extensive, recent survey, over 600 locals and visitors gave 50 different advantages of a station at Beattock, including 100-200 who said they would commute from there to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Carlisle. 100 young people thought it would give them greater independence in travelling. These responses were from open questions, which took 9 months to collate into a readable database but was well worth the effort. Benefits to tourism and environmental advantages, as well as enabling people to stay in the area, were among other reasons elicited from the survey. The BSAG has clear and substantial evidence that a station at Beattock makes economic, environmental and social sense, and is now calling on the communities of Beattock, Moffat and the surrounding areas to donate towards a STAG report, which will be carried out by an industry specialist.

<http://www.beattockstationactiongroup.org.uk/>

Edinburgh - (Capital Rail Action Group - CRAG)

The cuts in the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme (EGIP) have given a breathing space to argue for a layout accessing the proposed sidings at the site of the former Abbeyhill station which would allow for a restored passenger service. Despite official encouragement to submit a request for consideration of a station at Abbeyhill as part of EGIP, Network Rail's plans were in fact all along such that a regular passenger service could never have been permitted, as it would have had always to encroach on the east coast main line rather than utilising the redundant trackbed between the Calton north tunnel and Abbeyhill. A station at Abbeyhill would serve the neighbouring Scottish Parliament and it would be a pity were the chance to be lost were the sidings eventually to be built in a way which precluded a passenger service.

At the east end of the city, the newly elected Portobello Community Council is keen to campaign for a re-opened Portobello station. Along with other representatives from the community council, Lawrence Marshall met the local MSP, Kenny MacAskill, in May to discuss how best to progress this matter. The immediate goal is to make sure that any re-modelling of Portobello junction allows for a station there which could be served by both the Waverley line to Tweedbank as well as East Coast Main Line services to/from North Berwick/Dunbar. After that, the necessary hoops need to be negotiated to prove that a station at Portobello would be worthwhile.

<https://sites.google.com/site/capitalrailactiongroup/>

Glasgow and Lanarkshire

Work continues to secure finance for an appropriate STAG evaluation for Glasgow Crossrail. A new route has been identified for a link to Glasgow Airport, and money made available from the UK Government means that a Glasgow airport rail link (GARL) is now back on the cards. However, a suggestion that this be served by tram-trains is being resisted, as through-running would not be possible and there could also be issues of congestion at Glasgow Central station. A conference to progress the Crossrail campaign was held at the end of October.

There is concern that the disruption caused by the improvements to Glasgow Queen Street Station, the

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our websites: www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk www.railwatch.org.uk



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terminus of Scotland's busiest rail service (Edinburgh-Glasgow), should be managed so as to be kept to a minimum, carrying out the works to the tunnel while the station is closed. A written petition, succeeded by an e-petition, demanding that the Almond Chord be constructed before the Winchburgh Tunnel is closed for several weeks for improvements, to avoid delays between Edinburgh and Glasgow as well as Fife is available to sign.

Meanwhile, in the Clydesdale area, a passenger survey has been carried out at Larkhall.

St Andrews & Fife

4th September marked the 25th anniversary of the launch of the Starlink campaign to reconnect St Andrews.

TayPlan, the strategic plan centred upon Dundee and including NE Fife, has declined to include St Andrews, (though they have included a re-opened station at Newburgh on the Ladybank-Perth line), because the STAG evaluation has not been carried out.

A useful meeting with Transport Minister Keith Brown MSP, arranged by Willie Rennie MSP, and attended by Rod Campbell MSP, Cllr Tim Brett of Fife Council and Jane Ann Liston, took place at the Scottish Parliament, where the Minister stated that local authorities, such as Fife Council, and regional transport partnerships, such as SESTRAN, have money to carry out STAGs. SESTRAN receives its money from said local councils but Fife Council has decided not to finance an evaluation of St Andrews, instead preferring to support one for Newburgh. Since both the Tata Steel report from 2012 and Scotrail have agreed that the STAG, which has been estimated to cost £100K, is the logical and essential next step, this inertia is disappointing. However, since the meeting with the Minister, Starlink has had informal but encouraging meetings with Network Rail and SESTRAN, the regional transport partnership, which it is hoped will lead to some pre-STAG work being carried out. In the meantime, the Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council has contacted its counterparts in Milnagavie, Alloa and North Berwick, to find out what these communities consider have been the advantages of having a rail service. The responses will then be used to extrapolate what a railway would mean for St Andrews.

Meanwhile round the coast, the Levenmouth station campaign has been relaunched and Fife Council has agreed to provide £100K to update the STAG from 2008.

<http://www.starlink-campaign.org.uk/>

<http://newburghtrainstation.org.uk/>

<http://www.lmrc-action.org.uk/>

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