



RAILFUTURE SCOTLAND NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2023

GLASGOW CENTRAL TICKET OFFICE, THREATENED WITH CLOSURE

Scotland's busiest station, Glasgow Central, with up to 32m passengers per year, is threatened with closure of its ticket office under the current plans put forward by the Department of Transport.

Its 17 platforms provide 33 trains per hour via Scotrail and a further 10 trains per day with other operators. Numerous services are provided by the ticket office, including Rail & Sail tickets, many different types of travel passes and travel rovers, PLUSBUS and RailBus services – none of which are available from ticket machines.



The original consultation only allowed for a three week response period: however after a public outcry, the response period was extended to 1 September. We await hearing the outcome.



INVERNESS AIRPORT STATION UPDATE

Our Inverurie member, Roderick Cromar, did a recce at Scotland's newest station at Inverness Airport, and reports as follows:

I made an expedition to Inverness airport yesterday.

I measured the distance from the railway station to the terminal building. It's 1.3 km which was quite a pleasant stroll in the summer sunshine. It would be a completely different story in more typical Highland weather.

The buses run every 30 minutes but are not coordinated with any aircraft or train.

There were approximately eight passengers to and from the airport getting on and off each train.

RAILFUTURE SCOTLAND AUTUMN MEETING

Railfuture Scotland's Autumn Meeting will be on Saturday 30 September at 2 pm in the Quaker Meeting House, Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh. Our speaker will be Scott Prentice from Scotrail who will tell us about new services and give us updates on existing services. As always there will be time for questions and for rail groups around the country to report on their activities.



We look forward to seeing you all then.

RAIL & SAIL

A legacy of the previous connections between the railway companies and ferry companies, is Scotrail's Rail & Sail. This enables the prudent passenger to buy a combined train and ferry ticket from any station in Scotland thus avoiding the hassle of having to seek out a boat ticket upon arrival at a possibly unfamiliar port prior to embarkation.

Due to the predominance of vehicle passengers as opposed to foot passengers, Rail & Sail is a shadow of its former self, when for instance steamers called at Kyle of Lochalsh for Skye or Stornoway.

The current Rail & Sail options are:

Orkney and Shetland:

- Kirkwall via Aberdeen
- Kirkwall or Stromness via Thurso and Scrabster (including taxi which you have to book)
- Lerwick (Shetland Isles) via Aberdeen

Mull, Skye and the Outer Hebrides:

- Craignure on Mull via Oban
- Castlebay on Barra via Oban
- Lochboisdale on South Uist via Oban
- Armadale on Skye via Mallaig
- Stornoway on Lewis via Inverness, and a coach from Inverness to Ullapool



Isle of Lewis at Oban

The Clyde Coast:

- Dunoon (Cowal) via Gourock
- Rothesay (Bute) via Wemyss Bay
- Brodick (Arran) via Ardrossan Harbour
- Campbeltown via Ardrossan Harbour
- Cumbrae via Largs



*Caledonian Isles from
Ardrossan Harbour Station*

Northern Ireland:

- Belfast via Ayr and Cairnryan (advance booking for the bus from Ayr to Cairnryan is required)

There was once a more convenient link, with the train going all the way to Stranraer Harbour, a matter of just a few yards from the ferry. However towards the end of 2011 the ferries left Stranraer for Cairnryan, 6 miles down the loch, so the rail component of the Rail & Sail journey is now only to Ayr railway station, where passengers change to a bus for the 45 mile journey taking just over an hour; apparently the option of extending the railway line to Cairnryan was not considered which is a pity since this change to the ferry service is probably responsible for persuading erstwhile foot passengers to switch to a car, precisely the opposite of what should be happening given the climate emergency.

Ardrossan Harbour station, albeit a longer walk to the ferry than the former one at Winton Pier, is not too far for a fit foot passenger, only lightly laden, and it is hoped that when the new terminal is completed the passenger access system will not be any more arduous. However, in the meantime, the Arran ferry will soon be moving to Troon for the necessary redevelopment of the North Ayrshire port to accommodate the new, larger ferries. However the railway station at Troon is 2 miles away from the ferry terminal, though

RAIL & SAIL (continued)

passengers have been assured that there will be a connecting bus. The work at Ardrossan is scheduled to last 2 years but given the well-documented delays to those ferries, Rail & Sail to Arran could be exiled to Troon for even longer. Again, it is likely that those who would otherwise have travelled as foot passengers will now be tempted to take a car for sheer convenience, and if so, it could be difficult to persuade them back to Rail & Sail once the ferry returns to Ardrossan.

There can be no doubt that with Scotland's ferry services passing through some of Scotland's most attractive scenery that the Rail & Sail option has a lot going for it. Recent changes to CalMac's ticket system, though, have introduced a potential hiccup. No longer does the railway ticket cover the whole journey; instead, one is issued with a separate ferry voucher which one must exchange at the ferry port for a ticket with a QR code. That does raise potential problems should there be a queue, for there is not much time between the connecting train arriving in the vicinity of the ferry port and the deadline for boarding. In fact, when I recently tried to exchange my voucher for a ticket just three days before travel, rather than on the day itself, this caused much confusion at Brodick, with a member of staff exclaiming that railway stations should not sell ferry tickets! I hope that is not a portent of things to come.

Details of Scotrail's Rail & Sail can be found at:

<https://www.scotrail.co.uk/tickets/combined-tickets-travel-passes/rail-and-sail>

Jane Ann Liston

AVANTI AND CROSS COUNTRY CONTRACTS RENEWED

Avanti West Coast have been awarded a new contract by the Department of Transport, with a core term of three years and a maximum possible term of nine years. There is provision for the DfT to terminate the contract after three years and they will be monitoring the train provider's performance during this period.

Avanti WC have been criticised for cancellations which are still running at an average of 3.5%, and punctuality is still only 46% (ORR data), so it is to be hoped that both these factors will improve substantially as quickly as possible.

Cross Country, which serves more stations in Scotland, has also had their contract renewed with a minimum of four years and maximum possible term of eight years. The existing fleets will be refurbished, the now retired HSTs will be replaced with more modern replacements and a direct daily service will be introduced between Cardiff and Yorkshire, the North East and Edinburgh from December 2024. Sadly, the services which were withdrawn at Dunbar at the May timetable have not been replaced, see article overleaf (page 4).

NEW MURALS AT PRESTONPANS STATION

New murals were unveiled at Prestonpans Station in April, thanks to the work of the East Lothian Community Rail Partnership, sponsored by Cross Country Trains. Harry Barker, Chair of the Partnership, unveiled the murals which are paintings photographed on to polyurethane to withstand the weather.



*The new murals at Prestonpans Station
photographed by J. Yellowlees*

Local artists were present, as was a representative from Preston Lodge High School who created one of the murals.

They represent the Waggonway, the earliest known railway in the country, the Mallard locomotive, a local Wiles bus which was a regular sight around Prestonpans, and the Prestongrange Heritage Museum.

If you're passing through Prestonpans, do look out for the murals on the station building.

CROSS COUNTRY WITHDRAWAL OF SERVICES OF DUNBAR

Rail Action Group East of Scotland (RAGES) have objected to the withdrawal of services at Dunbar, which have come into effect over the summer. The main service withdrawals from Monday to Friday are:

Monday to Friday Northbound

13:41 to Edinburgh from Plymouth

15:40 to Edinburgh from Plymouth

19:48 to Edinburgh from Plymouth

Monday to Friday Southbound

11:27 from Aberdeen/Edinburgh to Plymouth

13:27 from Edinburgh to Plymouth

17:28 from Edinburgh to Bristol

20:24 from Glasgow Central to York



A CrossCountry train at Dunbar photographed by Barrie Forrest

Additional services are affected at weekends, and in one case, there is a three hour gap in services. The reasons for this are unclear as a “consultation” took place, but did not involve the local authority, MSP or Community Councils, and appears to have been a consultation among the train operators. Given that Dunbar is a rapidly growing town, this loss of service will only drive passengers back to their cars and makes longer journeys more tiring and difficult.

Tom Thorburn, President of RAGES, roundly condemned these changes, saying “The cuts are totally unjustified and are going to have a devastating effect on Dunbar and wider East Lothian, not just for Edinburgh commuters but for journeys south”.

Judith Priest, Chair of Dunpender Community Council at nearby East Linton, agreed, saying “I frequently travel to visit relatives at Kettering, and always used the 11.27 from Dunbar which was extremely handy. I now have to set off two hours earlier and change at Berwick, and a 3 change journey is now lengthened to 4 changes and almost an hour longer, making it very difficult and tiring.”

RESTON STATION CELEBRATES FIRST YEAR IN SERVICE

Inhabitants of Reston and the surrounding Berwickshire area celebrated the first year of the return of their rail service. Although the first year has been marred by cancellations, services have now returned almost to normal, and ORR figures for the first year totalled 15,000 journeys.

Railfuture’s estimate of passenger usage at Reston was 18,000 per annum so it looks as if a year of full service will easily outstrip this figure.



photographed by Barrie Forrest



*A60103 “Flying Scotsman” passes through the near complete East Linton Station on 1 July 2023, showing platforms, shelter and footbridge
photographed by Tom Dickson*

STATION PROGRESS AT EAST LINTON

Progress at East Linton continues with work ongoing on the adjacent car park for 115 parking spaces.

The Station will be open by March 2024 and may open ahead of that date.