

Scotland

Picture: www.laurencekirk.info/



The first train to stop at Laurencekirk station for more than 40 years was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd in May. Local people from Laurencekirk and from other villages and towns in Aberdeenshire attended the official and formal reopening of the station following a 10-year campaign.



The station in its derelict state before work began
Picture: David Francis

The £3.5million refurbished station was formally reopened by Scottish Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Minister, Stewart Stevenson, watched by First Scotrail managing director Steve Montgomery. Ex-British Rail signalman William Kerr who worked at the signalbox – still in use – before the station

closed in 1967, a victim of Dr Beeching, was a guest at the ceremony.

West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine MSP Mike Rumbles and Network Rail's director for Scotland Ron McAulay also attended.

Laurencekirk, on the East Coast main line between Montrose and Stonehaven, first opened in 1848. The station was transformed with funding from Transport Scotland and NESTRANS, which was supported by Aberdeenshire Council and the Railway Heritage Trust.

Commuters now have 11 services northbound towards Aberdeen and 10 services southbound towards Edinburgh and Glasgow daily.

Work began in October last year on refurbishing the station with two new platforms, a heated waiting room, a new footbridge, a ticket machine, CCTV cameras and customer information systems. The rail freight company DB Schenker owns Laurencekirk rail freight yard which is adjacent to the station.

It has been estimated that a reopened station at Laurencekirk could generate up to 36,000 rail journeys each year.

Following the reopening of the Alloa-Stirling line a year ago, it was expected that 155,000 people would use the line. In fact over 400,000 passengers travelled on it in the first year.

For a video of the opening day, see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/north_east/8055093.stm

■ ■ Ayr to Stranraer

Transform Scotland has published a new report urging measures to promote the Ayr to Stranraer line, "Scotland's forgotten rail line". It is calling for three fast, daily services between Glasgow and Stranraer. The report's author, David Spaven of Deltix Transport Consulting, said the route had major "tourism potential".

SCOTS WAY FORWARD

By Donald MacPhee

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A multi-billion pound transport blueprint, which will allow Scotland's economy to expand, was set out by ministers in the Scottish Government at the end of 2008.

The details were announced in the Strategic Transport Projects Review which sets out the future investment programme for transport in Scotland over the next 20 years.

STPR identified 29 major transport investment priorities across Scotland including the following of interest to rail campaigners:

A new rail station at Gogar created to integrate with the Edinburgh tram network and provide onward connection for passengers using Edinburgh Airport.

Rail and road infrastructure improvements to improve freight links from our major freight terminals of Grangemouth, Mossend and Coatbridge to key points across Scotland and into England.

Plans for a new national integrated ticketing scheme allowing people to travel across all public transport using just one ticket.

There were also ambitious proposals to revolutionise the rail network including:

Electrification of parts of the rail network. Major enhancements to the **Edinburgh-Glasgow** line reducing journey time to 35 minutes, with 13 services per hour (from current three to six per hour). Some components of **Aberdeen Crossrail** scheme to be delivered. Improvements to **Aberdeen-Inverness** and consideration of a station at Kintore.

Glasgow rail improvements, including construction of new city centre stations linking the rail networks to the north, south and east of the city and the development of a metro or light rapid transit network across Glasgow, improving access to areas of economic activity and key public services, such as the new Southern General Hospital. Faster, more frequent rail services linking **Fife, Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh, Perth and Glasgow**, reducing journey times between

Inverness and central Scotland by up to 30 minutes and by up to 20 minutes between Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

Upgrade of **Haymarket Interchange**.

However, a key feature was the inclusion of a new strategy for a toll-free £1.72-£2.34billion replacement Forth road crossing which is considered by many to be both unwelcome and unnecessary.

Railfuture Scotland is supporting the ForthRight Alliance in campaigning against the proposed bridge. If it does come to fruition, then it is intended the existing bridge will be made a dedicated public transport only corridor.

The STPR is the first nationwide, multi-modal, evidence-based appraisal of Scotland's current transport system, and pro-rail campaigners welcome its publication.

During his statement to Parliament, Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson also indicated progress on some of the projects would be "fast-tracked", including the Edinburgh-Glasgow Rail Improvement Programme, the Highland main line between Inverness and Glasgow/Edinburgh via Perth together with rail services between Aberdeen and Inverness.

Schemes which already under way or which are deemed to be committed to by Transport Scotland are not included in the STPR.

The Borders reopening between Edinburgh and Galashiels falls into this category and there is concern in some quarters about the time being taken to start this project. The current start date is sometime during 2011.

Railfuture campaigners in Scotland are also disappointed about the omission of the Glasgow Crossrail scheme. This project has wide support from a range of bodies.

The STPR process will not be the only means by which rail investment will be delivered in Scotland as it does not specifically include Local Authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships schemes.

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