

Scotland



■ ■ Here come the trains

Children in the village of Caldercruix, like the rest of the 2,000-population community in North Lanarkshire, are becoming excited about the prospect of passenger trains stopping at their village for the first time for more than 50 years.

Eighteen months from now, people in towns and villages such as Caldercruix will be able to jump on a train and quickly get to Scotland's two biggest cities and from there to destinations throughout Great Britain.

Rhona Reid, acting head teacher at Glengowan Primary School in Caldercruix said: "We've already been discussing possible angles for our teaching, from the history of the old railway line to talking about the changes within society.

"The children see work starting to happen and are asking a lot of questions about it. They already understand that it will make a big difference.

"As the development gains momentum, before the new line opens, there's no doubt that we'll also be talking to the children and their parents more and more about the potential dangers of playing near railways.

"There are so many ways that the new railway will make a difference to the school. It will open up options for school excursions and visits.

"We recently went to the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow. Once the link is open, we can look at taking classes through to destinations in Edinburgh and the east - the Zoo, the Museum of Scotland or places like Dynamic Earth.

"For me personally, it could change my commuting habits. I live in Airdrie and drive to the school at the moment. When the new link opens, I hope to travel by rail more often.

"It will be great for the meetings I go to in Coatbridge and Glasgow. I can jump on the train without having to worry about parking when I get there. I know some of the other staff are

thinking the same and we cannot wait." Caldercruix station is being rebuilt as part of the Transport Scotland funded Airdrie-Bathgate rail project which will enable Glasgow and Edinburgh to be linked by a fourth rail route.

As well as Caldercruix, the stations at Bathgate, Armadale, Drumgelloch and Airdrie are currently being rebuilt with the route to be electrified.

Over 500,000 tonnes of earth will need to be excavated, 28 bridges replaced and 11 new ones built. Work has also begun on the new cycle path that will run alongside the railway.

"We believe the long term benefits of this project will be worth the short term inconvenience and look forward to people having more public transport travel options to Scotland's biggest cities and beyond," said Hugh Wark, Network Rail's senior project manager.

The line from Bathgate to Edinburgh has already been double-tracked and the stations in the eastern section upgraded.

EURO WAY FORWARD

Two Railfuture campaigners, Trevor Garrod and Tony Smale, have contributed to a textbook about passenger representation on public transport across Europe which was published in Germany recently by the Nexus Institute of Berlin.

In the book, Railfuture director Trevor writes about the formation and work of the European Passengers' Federation, while Railfuture activist Tony focuses on Britain's passenger representation at a local, regional and national level.

Another British contributor was John Cartledge of the official public transport watchdog, London TravelWatch.

Public transport is essential to the quality of life of its passengers and also to achieve a sustainable environment.

The passenger's position is, however, weakened by the dominance of monopolies, regulation and political influence in our public transport systems.

This book is one of the first to examine strategies for the representation of user interests in public transport from a variety of perspectives.

The authors review approaches to integrating the passengers' views in the planning process and to protecting their interests in operations and customer care across a range of European countries, including Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK as well as in EU policies.

The book presents the conclusions of this research and examples of good practice.

In this respect it will provide useful guidance for policy makers, stakeholder organisations and planners, as well as transport researchers.

Rod Lock of East Suffolk Travellers' Association adds: Contributing authors to this well-researched book also include several European academics and transport researchers.

The six chapters extend to 279

pages with some issues elaborated and explained. There are 19 pages of bibliography.

As is to be expected, passengers' rights receive considerable attention, the situation in Austria comparing unfavourably with that in other countries mentioned. Passengers' only legal right to claim is if a connection is missed.

A higher level of competition does not automatically result in a higher level of quality but there are ideas for how service quality can be judged, and how user organisations can carry out their own quality checks.

Chapter 4, User Participation in Public Transport, the most helpful chapter for user groups, includes an insight into the procedure for the preparation of the highly praised Swiss timetable.

This involves intensive public participation, including publication on the internet since 2004. Germany has since followed the Swiss practice.

Chapter 5, Planning Public Transport, Customer Representation and Passenger Rights in Europe, is the most readable part of the whole book, covering such issues as organisation, planning, user representation, passenger rights and customer service.

The UK's strength is recognised as being the public financing of national passengers' "watchdog" organisations.

The concluding chapter analyses The Future Passengers' Rights and Passenger Participation, with the European Commission said to be very active in advancing the development of passengers' rights.

Public Transport and its Users: The Passenger's perspective in Planning and Customer care.

Edited by Martin Schiefelbusch and Hans-Ludiger Diemel.

The book is published in English by Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 304pp hardback, price £65. ISBN 978-0-7546-7447-4.

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