

Scotland

Anger over plan to cut through trains

Proposals for the withdrawal of the four through trains from London to Aberdeen and the one through train to Inverness have provoked outrage in Scotland. MPs and MSPs have been urged to fight the cost-cutting idea which has been described as either ignorant or patronising and the result of a "Beeching mentality".

Former Audit Commission chairman Sir Andrew Foster said he believed that "passenger-friendly train changes" at Edinburgh could save the Government tens of millions of pounds. He believes electric trains should be run between London and Edinburgh, with the final leg of the journey on existing diesel engines.

But Scottish Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson said the idea is "simply unacceptable". Protesters point out that local ScotRail trains could not carry the numbers of passengers or their large amounts of luggage.

Duncan MacIntyre, chairman of the Highland transport partnership Hitrans, said: "This would be a tragedy for Scotland - particularly when parts of the north become more economically important because of wind energy. We need the transport links to grow."

Herald Journalist Gordon Casely dismissed the cost-cutting idea as nonsense and said that rather than running diesel IC125 trains from London, electric locos could haul the through trains to Edinburgh where diesel locomotives are available to haul the trains further north.

Fight goes on for the Waverley line



WELL MET: Madge Elliot

Picture: BRUCE MCCARTNEY

The Coalition Government's Scottish Secretary Michael Moore (Lib-Dem) has pledged his support to reopening the line from Edinburgh Waverley to Carlisle. He boarded a train in July to open the Waverley Route Heritage Association's new centre at Whitrope and said: "Let's get to Tweedbank first and then to Hawick and Carlisle. The development here is about keeping the public interest alive and we need to maintain that."

The *Hawick News* reported that he was met by Madge Elliot who fought against the 1969 closure of the line by Labour Transport Minister Richard Marsh, who was also British Rail chairman from 1971 to 1976 when rail closures continued.

The Borders Rail Project, which involves reopening the line from Waverley to Tweedbank, near Galashiels, was launched by Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson in March although major work will not start until next year.

Passengers flock to reopened rail lines

The reopened Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line is carrying nearly three times the projected number of passengers. Edinburgh-Bathgate, reopened 1986, is carrying four times more passengers than projected while Larkhall-Hamilton and Annesland-Maryhill are both carrying 40% more passengers than expected. Laurencekirk station is being used by nearly twice the number of passengers predicted since being reopened in May last year.



Hackney in the lead

Hackney leads London in railway development - in one respect at least.

According to *Britain's Growing Railway*, Railfuture's latest A-Z guide of national rail reopenings, one third of the 27 new or reopened mainline stations in London over the past 50 years have now been in our borough.

This milestone passed as we celebrated the opening of the East London Railway, the second of two orbital lines through Hackney to be reopened in 30 years.

Hackney's rail renaissance began in 1980 with the reopening of Hackney Central and Hackney Wick stations.

Kingsland station in Dalston followed in 1983. Then in 1985 the reopening of Homerton station coincided with third-rail electrification of the North London Line.

After a fire in 1981, British Rail reopened London Fields station in 1986 in part-recompense for the closure that year of the parallel Broad Street route. Much of this stretch of line is now integrated into the Overground network with four more new or reopened Hackney stations, and linked directly with south London communities through Brunel's Thames tunnel.

Hackney Council has sought to demonstrate sustained leadership as a founder member of the lobbying East London Line Group.

This 20-year long alliance of over a dozen local authorities,

various regeneration partnerships, private sector bodies, and other organisations has persisted in its role as the critical friend of first London Underground, then Railtrack and the Strategic Rail Authority, and finally Transport for London, in making the case for "the regeneration railway".

In 2002 the group calculated that at least £10 billion of regeneration along the line would be supported by this £1 billion investment, a healthy ratio if ever there was one! This record of success must be built on.

In north London, the recent and popular temporary service between Camden and Willesden via Queen's Park must become a permanent link, including a reopened Primrose Hill station.

The value of orbital Barking-Gospel Oak line services could be enhanced with electrification infills and extension at both ends.

In south London, a way must be found to fund Surrey Canal Road station, and to serve Brixton town centre.

In west London the prospect of a High Speed 2/Crossrail 1 interchange between the North and West London Lines at Old Oak Common offers new opportunities.

Looking ahead, London boroughs will be developing their collaboration through the new Orbital London Group.

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Crisis planning

I was pleased to read in *Railwatch* 124 that at this year's AGM, Railfuture members unanimously voted for a resolution calling for

better crisis transport planning.

I am tired of passengers being left in the lurch when anything goes wrong on our transport system.

Eurostar passengers have been stranded in the Channel Tunnel and at London St Pancras or Paris Nord, London Underground passengers trapped below ground on a hot summer's day, rush-hour commuters waiting at a London suburban station when a bomb scare occurred along the route or air passengers stranded for hours on planes stuck at Heathrow without food because of snow.

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Timetable miles

There has been much criticism of the National Rail printed timetable regarding both its accuracy and its clarity. A magnifying glass is virtually essential!

It seems to me that far too much reliance is placed on the internet and timetable downloads but all too often these are far from satisfactory. However, I have a particular concern with Southern which has withdrawn timetable books 1-3 (Brighton Main Line, East and West Coastway), to be replaced with a large number of mini folders covering just some sections of the lines.

There are many failings, including the lack of connections, the failure to show all stations and sometimes the removal of services of other train operators.

Whereas before passengers could select a page and quickly see the passage of a train throughout its journey and what time it would connect with branch line trains, this is no longer possible.

The three booklets were ideal, particularly for consulting during a train journey, but now you have to remember which folders to take out with you and ensure they don't get caught up with other papers in your pocket or bag.

This is clearly not progress and I have asked Southern to justify its decisions.

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Rail and economy

I attended the Railfuture AGM in Taunton and was deeply concerned by an item in the Railfuture manifesto.

Under railways and the economy, it was stated that "some 80% of rail trips are ... essential to the economy. The remainder benefit social wellbeing ... and the British

tourist industry".

Why does Railfuture regard tourism as not making any contribution to the national economy? A recent Sheffield Hallam University report showed that over 200,000 jobs are generated by seaside tourism alone (considerably more than, for example, car production). Seaside tourism contributes about £3.6 billion to the economy.

In many coastal locations, over 15% of local employment is in tourism. In short, tourist travel is of equal importance for the economy as commuting or business trips.

The Railfuture manifesto must recognise this and ensure resorts get convenient trains linking them with the main population centres to support tourism.

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Norman Bradbury writes: It was certainly not my intention to imply that tourism was not an important contributor to the economy and I am surprised anyone should have interpreted my reference to it in that way, particularly since it was mentioned under the section on the economy. Perhaps I made the mistake of assuming readers would take it without saying that there was a strong link between the economy and tourism.

Heritage railways are major tourist attractions that bring benefits to their local economy. For example, the reopening of the Welsh Highland Railway has cost around £40 million but it is estimated to bring external benefits to the local economy worth £14 million each year. In other words, it will pay for itself in about three years. Tourism also generates the lion's share of revenue on many National Rail routes and many tourists make use of rail services in pursuit of their leisure activities. However, as a whole, tourism generates a drain on the UK economy because more people travel out of the UK for leisure than visitors come from overseas. The annual net tourism deficit attributable to aviation alone is now estimated to cost the UK economy some £18 billion per year.

The fact remains that, according to Department for Transport statistics, the great majority of rail journeys involve getting people to work and education and it is this contribution to the national economy that I felt needed to be emphasised in the manifesto.

◆◆◆◆ The car lobby is aggressive in London - former Copenhagen Mayor Ritte Bjerregaard

Your letters extra

East Midlands

By Anthony Kay

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Going for gold standard

Network Rail has applied for planning permission and listed building consent for platform and canopy extensions at Loughborough to cope with 10-coach trains. With the existing platforms only the length of four carriages, passengers on longer trains have to move forward in order to alight. The footbridge to platforms 2 and 3 is also going to be replaced and a lift added. There is a certain urgency to this work. With its excellent sporting facilities, Loughborough has been chosen as the base for both the British and Japanese teams in Olympic year 2012. We hope the athletes' first view of Loughborough is at a railway station fit for purpose. Network Rail says there will be a new eastern gateway with an improved car park, and access for buses and taxis. Cycle parking, toilets, CCTV, waiting rooms and booking office will be upgraded. The canopies were expected to be completed by October this year while the rest of the work is expected to be finished by January 2012. Wayne Kyte, route manager for East Midlands Trains, said: "The changes will complement the improvements we have made to train performance and customer service over the past two years, and will ensure that passengers using Loughborough station can have an enjoyable journey from start to finish."

Northampton station will be 'inspiring' gateway to town

Another station due for major renovation is Northampton. The most detailed plans so far were revealed in June, showing a large glass entrance, with the station connected to a six-storey car park. It is hoped the new building, designed by Hyder Consulting, will be completed in 2014 and that it will pave the way for further commercial development in the vicinity. Northamptonshire County Council has pledged £350,000 towards the project, with West Northamptonshire Development Corporation providing £900,000. WNDP chief executive Peter Mawson said the new station would be a "much more inspiring gateway to Northampton".

Devon and Cornwall

By Gerard Duddridge

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Community railways

First Great Western reported a 37.8% increase in passenger numbers on the Truro-Falmouth line. Since the opening of the passing loop at Penryn there has been a half-hourly service. In fact all the Cornish branch lines are seeing more use, including the Newquay branch, up 54.8%. In Devon, the Exeter-Barnstaple line, which now has an hourly service for most of the day, has increased its passenger numbers by 11.6%. This suggests there has been a suppressed demand for many of these services, just waiting for better timetables with a more frequent train service. On the Okehampton line, plans by the Dartmoor Railway to run a regular passenger service have been delayed until December. There have been problems in getting licences. The scheme would see trains going as far as a newly reopened platform at Yeoford, where they would connect with the Barnstaple-Exeter service.

Exeter to Newton Abbot inland route problems.

Sainsbury's is pursuing its proposal for a store at the greenfield site at Shutterton Bridge, near Dawlish. In our 2000 Rail Strategy, we identified this land as suitable for a station on an inland Exeter-Newton Abbot route. Such a line might be needed in future to avoid the vulnerable coast line. We objected in 2008 and Sainsbury's latest plan moves the store by 17 yards, although it would still block the potential alignment. It claims the scheme accords with local and national policy objectives. Sainsbury's appears not to have recognised that there is a strategic need to have a reliable railway to Plymouth, Torbay and Cornwall for the future. An alternative inland route could be provided by the former Teign Valley line either new or on the old alignment. However, the embankment has been removed on a vital section within Exeter when Sainsbury's expanded its Alphington store.

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