



Teachdail Rèile na h-Alba

Welcome to our 2018 newsletter.

As the map on the back page shows, your committee members were out and about all over Scotland last year, visiting campaigning groups and meeting our members at model rail exhibitions as well as our Branches & Groups day in Perth. We even made two trips across the Border to carry the Railfuture Scotland banner.

Over the following pages you can read in detail about Scottish rail campaigning.



East Coast franchise to finish early

The Stagecoach/Virgin consortium, which operates Virgin Trains East Coast, has announced that the franchise will cease to operate from 2020, three years early. No decision has yet been taken about a successor. The consortium took over from East Coast Trains in 2015.

The Westminster Transport Secretary, Chris Grayling, has not ruled out taking the line back into public ownership.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Electrification

The reduced EGIP is live and trains under test. There are around 2,000 separate checks to be reported on to the Office of Road and Rail before they can authorise use of the new Hitachi trains for passenger use. This is anticipated to be completed by March. The trains have an acceleration rate of more that double that of the type 170 diesel EMUs they will replace. This will result in an almost ten minute saving in journey time between Glasgow and Edinburgh before the end of the year. The remainder of the original EGIP connecting with Alloa and Dunblane is underway and still appears to be on track for end 2019. Electrification of the Shotts line was awarded to Carillion but it is hoped that its collapse will not unduly delay the work. However this only represents 74 track kilometres of electrification against the 100 track kilometres per annum we were promised after EGIP. We still await where and when the next lengths of electrification are proposed. Railfuture had called for this programme to be accelerated to 200 km per annum to get the programme back on track to meet the Strategic Transport Programme Review target.

RailQwest

RailQwest continues to lobby Glasgow politicians to build the 1.8 miles of track which would create Crossrail, and link the lines using Queen Street and Central with a station at Glasgow Cross. Glasgow City Council is being urged to ensure that a small piece of land is safeguarded from development, because should it disappear under houses, the effectiveness of Crossrail will be compromised.

Crossrail

At the present time Scotland's rail network is still disjointed by the lack of direct connectivity between two historically separate 'east of' and 'west of Scotland' networks focussed on terminus stations at Glasgow Central and Queen Street high level-stations. Crossrail is a vital modernisation project involving re-opening and electrification of the existing 1.8 miles of City Union line across central Glasgow, currently used by freight and occasional passenger excursion trains. When upgraded for regular services, Crossrail would offer a wide range of through/direct services throughout Scotland by avoiding the inconvenience of changing stations across central Glasgow.

Rail Action Group East of Scotland



RAGES has been working with Scottish Borders and East Lothian Councils to expedite the opening of Reston and East Linton

stations, now scheduled to take place sometime in Control Period 6, i.e. 2019-2024.

Through the efforts of MSPs John Lamont, Rachel Hamilton and Iain Gray, they have also met Transport Minister Humza Yousaf MSP. The rail industry's response to the challenges raised by the new stations includes passing loops and some track quadrupling, so that a local stopping service could be run without delaying the express trains on the East Coast Main Line.

Rail User Groups Day

For the first time, Railfuture hosted a session for rail user groups in Scotland – to come together to talk about matters of current interest, learn from each other and publicise their campaigns.

Nine groups participated – Campaign for Borders Rail; Rail Action Group East of Scotland (RAGES); Newburgh Station Action Group; St Andrews Rail Link; Levenmouth Rail Campaign; Friends of the Far North Line; Friends of the West Highland Line; Capital Rail Action Group and South West Scotland Transport Partnership. This was organised in Perth as a central venue.

Group representatives summed up their achievements and a presentation on Social Media highlighted its effectiveness and how it can be used to gain headlines and keep groups in the public eye. Other sessions were on Using your Elected Representatives and Creating a Good Newsletter. The newsletter session was run by Friends of the Far North Line, who scooped the Gold Award in the Railfuture User Group National Awards for their excellent publication and they had useful tips on how groups could benefit from a well-structured and informative newsletter.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Fife

The Forth Rail Link campaign was boosted by Fife Council's granting £30K for the STAG pre-assessment, which will investigate the possibilities of using the former Longannet Power Station line to enable a Dunfermline-Glasgow service.

Levenmouth campaigners are frustrated after receiving no funding from the Edinburgh City Deal. Despite having two STAG evaluations carried out, courtesy of Fife Council, Transport Scotland are requesting even more information, suggesting that they build a more robust business case.

StARLink (St Andrews Rail Link) campaign was dismayed when a St Andrews line was omitted from the latest Fife Plan. Therefore StARLink commissioned a Policy Review of transport options for St Andrews by Peter Brett Associates, thanks to the generosity of Railfuture and the Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council. The highly encouraging results were presented to interested parties, along with the 2012 Tata report and a detailed statistical analysis carried out by a University statistician, detailing the problems due to St Andrews only being accessible by road.

Beattock Action Station Group



Beattock station, opened in 1847, closed in 1972 when the West Coast main line was electrified and modernised to speed up the Glasgow to London services.

Over the past six years, representatives have met up with train operators to put the case for the station re-opening forward. There is local support from MPs and MSPs as well as Swestrans Board and Peter Brett Associates. During 2016 and 2017, Beattock took part in STAG pre-appraisal, STAG Part 1 and STAG Part 2.

This year, representatives have met the Transport Minister Humza Yousaf MSP at the Scottish Parliament with pupils from local primary schools expressing how the station would benefit them.

Campaign for Borders Rail

Following the undeniable success of the Edinburgh-Tweedbank service, CBR activists are making the case to extend the line to Hawick and Carlisle. The re-opening of the railway to Galashiels has resulted in a measurable spike in all aspects of the tourism industry in the Borders region and also a significant improvement in Midlothian.

Lanark

Following the return of Carstairs-Edinburgh trains, Lanark is campaigning for restoration of its Edinburgh rail service, which previously ran several times a day. Railfuture Scotland is working on a demand model for a Lanark-Edinburgh service.

Far North Line

The Friends of the Far North Line, who are trying to improve the speed and reliability of journeys between Inverness and Wick and Thurso, have welcomed calls for improvements to the Far North Line by Rhoda Grant MSP and Jamie Stone MP. Because journeys have actually become slower within the past 10 years and journeys suffer from an increased number of cancellations, local campaigners have suggested a seven-point plan to cut the Inverness-Thurso journey time from almost 4 hours to less than 2 hrs 30 minutes.

West Highland Line

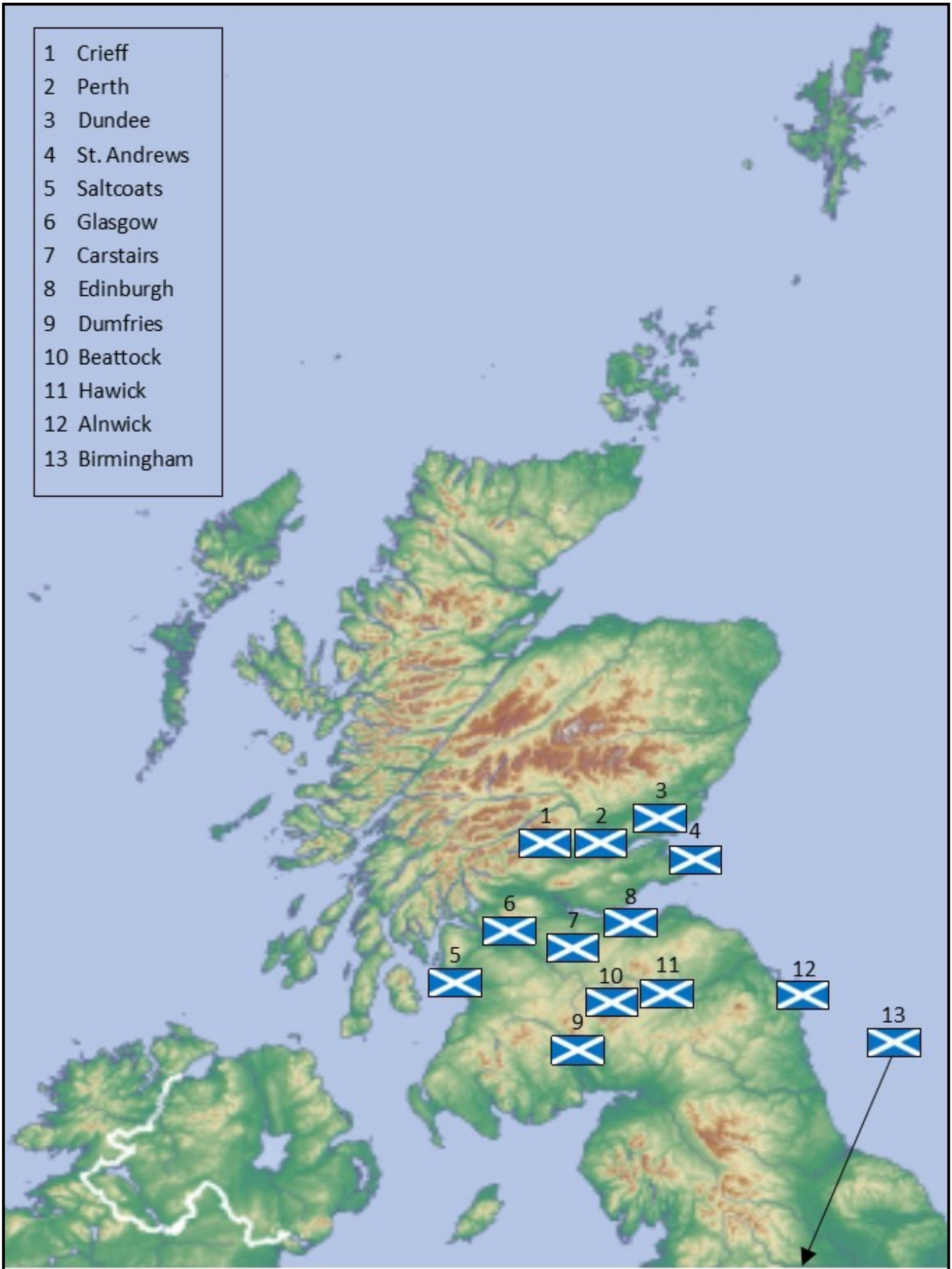
The Friends of the scenic West Highland line reported on their success in achieving a better service between Glasgow and Oban, but expressed concern about the proposed change of rolling stock with its greatly reduced number of bicycle spaces, surely a perverse decision for a prime tourist line. Since then, the suggestion of special carriages for the conveyance of bicycles and sports equipment has been mooted for this and other tourist lines.

Ayrshire and the South West

The South West Community Rail Partnership recently expressed concern about the future of rail services to Stranraer, which recently lost its status as a ferry terminal, as well as to Ayr and Girvan. Railfuture Scotland has been developing and testing a package of measures for the improvement of rail services in Ayrshire designed to maximise transfer of road traffic to rail.

Railfuture Scotland Activities 2017

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