

railfuture

SCOTLAND | ALBA



Teachdall Rèile na h-Alba

Dunbar station – New Down Platform



Photo Credit: East Lothian Council

Dunbar railway station platform 2 was officially opened on Tuesday 17 December 2019. The official opening ceremony was attended by representatives from Transport for Scotland, Network Rail and their contract partners, RAGES, Dunbar Community Council and local residents.

The opening of platform 2 is an enabler of one of RAGES strategic aims of an improved rail service between Edinburgh and Dunbar with services extended to Berwick-upon-Tweed at a later stage. The £13 million investment by Transport Scotland has delivered a new 271m platform with a 30m span footbridge and lift access from each platform (aerial photo shows new platform and bridge). The new platform will be long enough to accommodate the new 10-car, Hitachi Super Express Train.



Photo Credit: East Lothian Council

The introduction of this new northbound second platform for Dunbar provides increased capacity and improved operational flexibility for local and cross border services on the East Coast Main Line. Previously all northbound and southbound services had to use the same platform. Northbound stopping services will now use the new platform. There are aspirations by train companies operating on the East Coast Main Line to operate more long distance and local services on the route. These couldn't be accommodated with the previous infrastructure.

Dunbar station, which was first opened by the North British Railway in June 1846, used to have two platforms and an overall roof. The northbound platform loop line was taken out of use and lifted in the early 1970s, whilst the platform itself and the station roof were both removed during the modernisation and electrification by British Rail of the northern end of the East Coast Main Line in 1987-88.

East Lothian Council has approved plans to install an access point from the new platform into the neighbouring housing estate, near the underpass at the north end of the station. When the additional access is built, a footpath link will be provided to connect into the new platform.

Tom Dickson

Hello and Goodbye

Railfuture Committee members Ron McLean and Lawrence Marshall helped to celebrate the launch of the new Azumas. Ron reports on the Inverness event

'A smooth journey with the train coping well with the gradients between Inverness to Perth. Passing Dunblane the change from diesel to electric was barely noticeable. The coaches were light and spacious but seats need more padding in standard class.'

And Lawrence says of the Aberdeen launch

'The trains are sleek, clean-looking and modern - and, above all, allow this service to run on electric rather than diesel power between Haymarket and London. Under diesel power the noise from the engines under the carriages was surprisingly minimal - passengers might barely notice the transition at Haymarket either way. Compared with the 125s - which LNER and its predecessors laudably maintained in tip-top condition until the end - there is greater legroom between the seats.'

And Goodbye to the 314s on the Glasgow lines from Ron

'I travelled from Glasgow Central to Wemyss Bay on the final 314. These were good for their time and for short journeys, however the heating was not good, seats were not comfortable and lacked padding.'



NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

The past and the future of rail

Our Secretary, Jane Ann Liston, was invited to write a piece for The Herald on railways today. Below is her thoughtful and analytical article.

All the signals point to railway being victim of own success

IF WE think back to the early 1980s, the railways in Scotland were indeed in a sorry state. Much of the rolling stock was old and unattractive, widely believed to be hand-me-downs from English regions.

Apart from the Strathclyde PTE, there was a feeling that closures loomed, fuelled by the infamous Serpell report, so there was little point in any upgrades, let alone any re-openings.

Fast-forward to the present day and the railways are a victim of their own success.

Unrecognisable from the 1980s, networks have newer trains, increased frequencies and even re-opened lines and stations, with more in the pipeline.

More people than ever want to travel by train, even eschewing their cars to do so, due to longer commuting distances, and a growing awareness of the environmental benefits of rail over road.

Unfortunately, all too often the system fails to cope. Stories abound of overcrowding, stop-skipping, (where hapless passengers are left on the platform), cancellations and breakdowns, with the added insult of annual increases announced just in time to spoil the festive season.

It's difficult to say whether or not the increase is fair – nobody likes paying increased prices – but because government has decided that more of the cost of the rail network should be borne by the passengers, rather than all taxpayers, increases are inevitable.

It is perhaps deemed too difficult to convince those who never use trains that



ANALYSIS

Train journeys have changed massively, says **Jane Ann Liston**, but rail firms still struggle with historical issues

they benefit from the railways because of the cars they remove from the road, leaving more space for those who need to drive and cutting emissions.

It should also be observed that the cost of motoring over the past decade or so has plummeted, compared to using public transport.

Of course cancelled or late trains are a serious problem, but compensation is available, and of course "delay-repay" did not exist in the days of BR.

There can be no doubt that the way the railways were privatised was problematic.

The track, now back in public ownership, is used by private train operating companies running trains they do not own but lease, so are unlikely to hold expensive reserve rolling-stock "just in case".

Repairs carried out by Network Rail over-run, leading to delays and cancellations, with the operating companies such as Scotrail taking the flak.

Nationalisation is not necessarily the answer. From 1948 the railways were

starved of investment by governments of both hues and used as a political football, often under the auspices of transport ministers who knew little about the railways and cared less.

Branches and stations were closed and lines were singled, reducing resilience. Now, with the great upsurge in rail passengers, it's no wonder the system cannot always cope.

Any nationalisation would have to be properly funded – in this country we don't confiscate private assets without compensation – and the industry protected against future political interference.

There are also still some archaic practices which need to be renegotiated with the workforce; for example, how on earth can a 21st century railway function seven days a week if Sunday working is optional? I would hazard a guess that the main bus companies are not so easy-going.

Staff shortages are further exacerbated by the train operating companies competing for drivers, with some companies able to pay more to poach this limited resource. As the saying is, this is no way to run a railway.

The Opinion survey of 1,000 passengers carried out for the RMT in June includes responses from all over the country, but it is not clear whether the 50 Scotrail passenger responses expressed the same concerns to the same degree as the overall result. Scottish annual rail fare increases tend to be less than those down south, for a start. And while there will always be

some rail passengers who threaten to switch back to cars, it may be that when they take into account the high parking charges in places like Edinburgh and Glasgow, they might realise they would not actually be saving much money.

Scottish rail journeys too, with the exception of the Strathclyde PTE, tend to be longer than English ones, because the country's population is more spread out.

Scotrail-bashing has become a national sport but it is noticeable that some of Abellio's sternest critics also regularly found fault with their predecessors, First. Could it be that both companies encountered similar difficulties in running services on inadequate infrastructure? And who is waiting in the wings to take it on when Abellio's contract ends?

Thanks to the policy of shifting the financial burden of funding the railways from the taxpayer to the passenger, fare increases would seem inevitable. It is, though, hardly likely to encourage the desperately needed modal shift from the private car.

What is needed is for public money to be invested in making up for the decades of neglect the railways have suffered so that the services can run where they are supposed to and when, including all scheduled stops, and even to some places which currently the network cannot reach. St Andrews, anybody?

Jane Ann Liston is secretary of Railfuture Scotland

“It is perhaps deemed too difficult to convince those who never use trains that they benefit from the railways”

Railfuture Autumn meeting 2019



Allan Armstrong, Secretary of the Levenmouth Rail Campaign, was the speaker at our Autumn meeting, giving an energising run through the campaign to have the line re-opened to Levenmouth.

Event at Wemyss Bay Station

Ron McLean represented Railfuture Scotland at the installation of a plaque at Wemyss



Bay Station by the Transport Trust, recognising the Station as a heritage site. Pictured with Ron is John Yellowlees, who organised the event.

EC Main Line Signage Restored



John Yellowlees alerted us to the fact that the Edinburgh-London East Coast Main Line sign had been restored by two volunteers from Network Rail, Russell Kimber and James Howie.

Spring Meeting and AGM

To emphasise the important role that rail plays in connections to the Scottish Islands, we have a new venue for the 2020 Spring Meeting and AGM,



on the PS Maid of the Loch, Balloch, on Saturday 18 April 2020 at 2pm.

We hope as many of you as possible will join us. Our speaker will be Ian Quinn on "Rail and Sail".

And Finally....



This beautiful picture of the Highland Chieftain by David Singleton marks the closure of many, many years of HSTs.