

railfuture

SCOTLAND | ALBA



Teachdail Rèile na h-Alba

RAILFUTURE SCOTLAND NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2024

Rather than a full newsletter this time, this is an update on events since our spring 2024 newsletter. Past issues can be read at <https://www.railfuturescotland.org.uk/news.php>, and this archive holds 25 issues going back to 2003.

It was good to see Railfuture members and others who made it to our Autumn Meeting in Edinburgh on Saturday 2 November to hear our guest speaker, Dennis Fancett, who is the chair of South East Northumberland Rail User Group (SENUG). He updated us on work at the Northumberland Line, which the group had been campaigning for over 19 years. They were just six weeks away from seeing the line's opening, albeit with only two of the six new stations ready for use by the public. I'm pleased to say that I was able to travel on the new line on Wednesday 4 December, ahead of the official opening on 15 December, and the amount of new housing adjacent to the towns along the Line was good to see. We hope that this will mean a revitalisation of this former mining area.

Of course, Scotland saw its own reopening six months earlier, the line to Leven on 2 June 2024. Again, Railfuture had an early chance to see the line. Railfuture held its national AGM in Edinburgh on 13 July, and more than a dozen members travelled with us on the line in the evening and to have a meal at a restaurant – bringing useful income to Leven.



We invited two guest speakers. Professor Scott Arthur (left) who was then the Transport and Environment Convener, Edinburgh City Council and had just been elected an MP. He talked about the City of Edinburgh's transport transition plans with focus on Edinburgh Trams incl. proposals to open a second line. View his slides at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display3758>.

Scott was followed by Dr George Hazel OBE (above right), a director of E-Rail. He talked about obtaining funding for rail schemes. You can also view his slides on the Railfuture website at <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display3765>. Paul McLennan MSP, one of Railfuture's Vice Presidents, was also present.

Recent activities by Railfuture Scotland

First and most important, we have been active in campaigning against the proposed reduction in ticket office opening hours. After notifying as many MSPs as we could on this issue, they were active in immediately asking questions in the Scottish Parliament and bringing this matter out into the open.

In December I received a letter from Fiona Hyslop, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, forwarded by my MSP, advising that ScotRail is carrying out a 12-week consultation with staff and trade unions, expected to be completed by March 2025. The proposals include a reduction in opening hours at 54 stations, while 12 stations will see their hours increase. I can send a copy of the letter to anyone who would like to see it (my address is at the bottom of this newsletter).

Two Committee members, Roderick Cromar and Lawrence Marshall, staffed a stall at Aberdeen Model Rail Show, which took place on 26 and 27 October. Many people stopped to chat, and questions were asked on the proposals for reinstatement of the Fraserburgh/Peterhead Line.

Model rail shows are a great way for Railfuture to meet the public and find out what they would like to see from Scotland's railway. Once again, we will be at Glasgow Model Rail Show from 21-23 February 2025 at the SECC, at Hall 3, Scottish Event Campus (SEC), Exhibition Way, Glasgow G3 8YW. For more information, please see: <https://modelrail-scotland.co.uk/model-rail-scotland-2025/>. We could really use some help at this Show – volunteers get free entry – so if you could help for a few hours, it would be much appreciated. Please let me know if you could assist. Hundreds of people visit the Railfuture stall over the weekend so there is a lot of chat!

We have also been asked to run a stall at Edinburgh Model Rail Show, which is a fairly new show. It will be held on **Sunday 1-Monday 2 June 2025** at George Watson's College. See their website: See: <https://edinburgh.org/event/edinburgh-model-railway-exhibition/>. We cannot do this show without help from Edinburgh members, so again any offers of help would be very valuable and would enable us to reach a new audience.

Rail services

The ScotRail timetable is now back to normal: sadly, the trial of off-peak fares all day every day has come to an end, although the original trial period was extended from six to 12 months. Passenger numbers had recovered well from the pandemic and were still increasing. We were advised that the required 10% take-up of new passengers did not materialise, and there was only an increase of 6.8% in passenger traffic beyond the growth that would have happened without suspending the peak-time fares.

For those of you who travel via Cross Country, I learnt in early December that they will benefit from a cascade of units from Avanti West Coast: only around 14 units but this should make a difference. Proposals have emerged of a possible new Glasgow-Sheffield Cross Country service which may be of interest.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) station usage figures have been released for April 2023-March 2024, and show a gratifying increase in usage at a lot of stations. The new station at East Linton had over 20,000 users in only three months. Figures for Levenmouth will be in the ORR stats covering 2024/25.

Best wishes for Christmas and for 2025, and I hope to see you at some of our events next year.

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