



PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING

Members' Debate: One Step Closer to Trains at Reston and East Linton

Thursday 27 November 2014

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Members' Business – S4M-11550 Jim Hume: One Step Closer to Trains at Reston and East Linton

Transform Scotland welcomes the award of the new ScotRail franchise to Abellio and the many enhancements to the railway that are promised by the new franchise holder. Historically the East of Scotland suffered very badly from the Beeching era closures and the suburban rail network serving Edinburgh is a pale shadow of that serving Glasgow. The re-opening of the Borders line will improve rail connections to the capital and services will be further enhanced by the re-opening of stations at Reston and East Linton.

Rail travel in the UK is at the highest level since the Second World War. At 1.6 billion journeys per annum passenger numbers, this now easily beats the post-war record year of 1957 when 1.1 billion journeys were taken.

It is now quite clear that the presumed link between passenger numbers and economic growth or decline no longer applies. This ever increasing demand for rail travel comes at a time of uncertainty in the economy not as before at a time of economic growth. The same trend is evident in Scotland where ScotRail's annual passenger total has reached an all-time record of 86 million. Rail is seeing a significant rise in modal share as well as giving rising benefits for the economy and society as a whole. It is also worth noting the contrasting trend in car use where the years from 2000 to 2014 have seen car use remaining stable compared to the very high growth experienced in the previous century.

Evidence from recent rail re-openings in Scotland suggests that passenger use often far exceeds forecasts. One of the earliest re-openings was the line from Edinburgh to Bathgate which in 1986 was forecast to carry 260,000 passengers per annum, but by 1989 usage had already exceeded 1 million per annum. Edinburgh Park Station opened in 2003 with a forecast for 130,000 passengers p.a., but by 2010 numbers were 459,000 p.a. The Larkhall line was re-opened in 2005 and SPT's business case forecast 225,000 passenger journeys p.a., but by 2007 the actual patronage was 53% above the forecast. The Alloa line re-opened in 2008 with a patronage forecast of 155,000 p.a., but by 2011 the actual patronage was 423,000 p.a. Laurencekirk Station was re-opened in 2009 and the business case suggested a patronage of 36,000 p.a. but by 2011 the figure was almost 75,000 p.a. It is quite clear that these new rail routes and stations have been an outstanding success and have demonstrated the latent demand for rail travel in Scotland.

	Forecast patronage	Actual patronage
Edinburgh-Bathgate	260,000 (1986)	> 1,000,000 (1989)
Edinburgh Park Station	130,000 (2003)	459,000 (2010)
Larkhall line	225,000 (2005)	344,250 (2007)
Stirling-Alloa	155,000 (2008)	423,000 (2011)
Laurencekirk Station	36,000 (2009)	75,000 (2011)

We are certain that the new service from Berwick -upon-Tweed serving re-opened stations at Reston and East Linton will bring rail travel to communities so long denied the option and we believe that it will be a great success.

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