

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 19 March 2025
5th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2133: Expand ScotRail's Inter7City routes to include Dunfermline

Introduction

Petitioner Andrew Wedge

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure every city in Scotland has a direct, express rail connection to each other by expanding ScotRail's Inter7City routes to include Scotland's newest city, Dunfermline.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2133>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 6 January 2025.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition can collect signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 131 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received submissions from the Scottish Government and the Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerks to the Committee
March 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2133: Expand ScotRail's InterCity routes to include Dunfermline

Petitioner

Andrew Wedge

Date Lodged

06 January 2025

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure every city in Scotland has a direct, express rail connection to each other by expanding ScotRail's InterCity routes to include Scotland's newest city, Dunfermline.

Background information

[The Scottish Government has announced it will seek a replacement for the High Speed Train \(HST\) fleet which operates on its InterCity routes](#), and is committed to moving more people from road to rail.

This creates an opportunity to expand the InterCity routes to include Dunfermline. This would improve connectivity between all of Scotland's major cities whilst helping boost the long awaited Alloa-Dunfermline link.

Current express services have seen tangible benefits to similar sized cities of Stirling and Perth whilst boosting access between Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow.

Dunfermline has 1 train a day in each direction to Perth; all other services only serve Edinburgh.

Providing hub stations in Fife, at Inverkeithing and Markinch, allows express services to connect with commuter communities. The West Fife area is underserved by rail, which sees huge numbers across all stations, set on the backdrop of new housing developments.

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on petition PE2133



Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

Dunfermline railway services: Dunfermline, granted city status in 2022 as part of Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations, has two railway stations – Dunfermline City and Dunfermline Queen Maragret. Both stations are located on the Fife Circle line and are regularly served by direct trains from Edinburgh, Glenrothes with Thornton, and Cowdenbeath. One direct Edinburgh to Perth service calls at both Dunfermline stations every day.

Inter7City services: Inter7City branding is used by ScotRail for through services linking Edinburgh and Glasgow with Aberdeen and Inverness, with intermediate stops including Dundee, Perth, and Stirling. These services are normally operated using High Speed Train (HST) rolling stock.

Introduced into revenue service in 1976, HSTs (also known as Intercity 125) were the workhorse of Britain’s intercity rail network until they were slowly retired by intercity operators in the late-2010s as new Class 800 rolling stock entered service. Taking advantage of this availability, the then Abellio ScotRail decided to lease 25 HSTs for Inter7City services. ScotRail HSTs entered service from 2018 following substantial refurbishment and the shortening for their formation to accommodate expected passenger numbers. They offered a higher quality passenger environment, more suited to longer journeys, than the commuter focused rolling stock previously used on these routes.

The Scottish Government recently started a procurement exercise for rolling stock to replace ScotRail HSTs, with entry into service expected in late 2026 or 2027.

Fit for the Future timetable consultation: [ScotRail ran a “Fit for the Future” consultation](#) between 11 September 2023 and 23 October 2023 that considered possible changes to rail service patterns and timetables in Fife. [ScotRail’s feedback on this consultation](#) stated that:

“A small number of responses asked for a direct service from Dunfermline to Dundee or Perth. As part of the Fit for the Future consultation ScotRail proposed that services between Edinburgh and Perth should call at all stations via Dunfermline and Cowdenbeath. However, the increase in journey time for customers traveling between Perth, Ladybank, Markinch, and Edinburgh was met with resistance. We listened to our customers and opted for services between Edinburgh and Perth operating via Kirkcaldy. A limited stop service via Dunfermline would have a comparable journey to the all-stations service via Kirkcaldy, but this would have to be an additional service or some stations would see an hourly service when they have a half-hourly

service today. As noted above, running an additional service from Edinburgh to Perth calling at limited stops would cost the public purse between £2.5 million and £3 million. As such, we are not proposing to take this forward.”

Alan Rehfish
Senior Researcher
27 February 2025

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot. Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Annexe C: Written submissions

Scottish Government written submission, 13 February 2025

PE2133/A: Expand ScotRail's InterCity routes to include Dunfermline

The proposal put forward by Mr Wedge through this petition is a reasonable one and it has been given detailed consideration over recent years by ScotRail, Network Rail and Transport Scotland. Existing services are kept under review to identify and maximise opportunities to improve punctuality, reliability, journey times and connectivity within our existing resource such as availability of train drivers, rolling stock and the capacity of the rail network infrastructure.

In 2022, ScotRail proposed an hourly Edinburgh to Perth via Dunfermline service as part of its “fit for future” timetable ([East of Scotland | ScotRail](#)). However, this received negative local response due to the impacts that would have on journey times, such as between Edinburgh and Perth, and loss of other connectivity in the region, such as from Kirkcaldy to Perth, and therefore the proposal was withdrawn. This illustrates the trade-offs that are created by amending existing services. Options to develop and enhance rail connectivity in Fife will continue to be kept under review as travel patterns evolve and rail patronage continues to increase.

Scottish Ministers have specified that Network Rail will continue to maintain the Alloa-Dunfermline route which is currently used by tourist charter trains and as a diversionary route for rail freight. The Scottish Government is aware of the housing development along the route and recognises that it may create opportunities in the future to help strengthen a business case for the re-introduction of passenger services.

The reopening of the Alloa to Dunfermline line for passenger services was appraised as part of the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2), with the final recommendations published in December 2022. While the transport appraisal that supported the final STPR2 recommendations did not find sufficient evidence to include this within the set of national priorities for rail investment, there remains a path of local or regional rail schemes to come forward subject to a strong business case being developed and suitable funding being available. Transport Scotland can provide details of the Alloa-Dunfermline appraisal should this be helpful to the Committee, and will continue to keep this under review to consider if it should be given priority in future.

To give due consideration to the extensive impacts this proposal would have across the rail network and substantial implications for ScotRail resource, a business case would be required to be developed and evidence supporting the case for change considered.

There continues to be significant budget pressures in relation to funding the existing rail network and services in Scotland. The financial situation facing the Scottish Government is, by far, the most challenging we have faced since devolution, requiring tough decisions about how to prioritise spending across all of our public services. Given these challenges, as well as the need for a formal business case to

be developed and the scale of this proposal, we are unable to give this priority at this point in time.

More generally, a number of steps have been taken by ScotRail to improve the service for rail passengers travelling to and from Fife, not least the new railway to Leven opening in 2024. Since December 2024, newly released rolling stock from some of the intercity routes are now serving Fife, increasing fleet resilience, and additional stops will continue to be made at Dalmeny and Burntisland to reduce pressure on busy morning and evening Leven services. In 2025, it is expected that Dunfermline is to gain an hourly service to Leven, providing Leven's second train per hour to and from Edinburgh.

Plans for a new fleet for the Fife, Borders and Glasgow suburban routes are currently in development. This is closely linked to our plans for the decarbonisation of the Fife and Borders routes through partial electrification, with the first stage of this between Haymarket – Dalmeny already under construction.

I hope this information has been helpful and I look forward to continuing to support the Committee in its consideration of this petition.

Yours sincerely,

FIONA HYSLOP
Cabinet Secretary for Transport

Petitioner written submission, 2 March 2025

PE2133/B: Expand ScotRail's InterCity routes to include Dunfermline

As a local resident of Dunfermline that regularly commutes across the country to support my role in government transport initiatives, I have a keen insight into the benefits of an effective and efficient public transport system and the wider industry. I thank the Cabinet Secretary for Transport for the response and the Committee for its consideration of this proposal.

I look forward to the addition of a service via Dunfermline to Leven however, this was originally meant to be in addition to existing services, meaning three trains an hour to and from the capital via north and west Fife (due to start last year). It is unclear if this will provide an improved additional train to Edinburgh (meaning one service every 20 minutes) or be made up from one of the current half hourly services so to create Leven's own half hourly service with no additional capacity for west Fife to the capital.

The proposed Edinburgh to Perth via Dunfermline service significantly improved the offerings from Scotrail, however, a small amount of feedback from Perth residents on a minor increase in journey time due to the additional stops on the North Fife line resulted in Dunfermline losing any improvement without a consultation into the benefits they had received to the city and wider area. When ScotRail were challenged the response stated no complaints came from our newest city, which had no need to complain as the service offer had improved significantly however, complaints were filled after the service was withdrawn.

Whilst I also appreciate Kirkcaldy saw a reduction in service the town is already incredibly well connected to London, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth, Inverness and Levenmouth. In comparison, Dunfermline and West Fife's city status and large, growing population is only served to Cowdenbeath, Glenrothes and Edinburgh. Additional stops on the south of Fife do help raise capacity however, the north and west have no ability to improve the service currently. Whilst at least 5 trains (sometimes as many as 8) an hour run in each direction via the south of Fife, the north in parts is only served by one.

My proposal was not to reduce capacity but instead to add additional routes to change the balance between west and north Fife with that of the south and east. According to Transport Scotland correspondence in June 2020, an express service via Dunfermline would be as quick for residents in the north of Scotland as any service via Kirkcaldy. The main difference being the higher number of stations between both sides of the line. The InterCity service provides a not all stopping service between Scotland's major cities and hubs, boosting connectivity and supporting the STPR2 recommendations for express city to city travel in addition to local commuter services creating the biggest benefit.

Procuring new rolling stock is the perfect time to consider that expansion, which should see an express offering via both Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline, with possible alternative services to Perth and Dundee alternating via both sides of the Fife line with connection points at Markinch, Inverkeithing, and Haymarket.

The extensive time for passengers to get to Glasgow or Stirling from Fife on public transport, which has no direct connection to communities despite lines north and south of the river, is appalling and isolating our poorest communities whilst detrimentally effecting commuters, students, tourists, and our industry. ScotRail could utilise these lesser used lines by direct express services which would take pressure off existing pinch points such as Haymarket whilst not requiring significant infrastructure initially for new stations.

Whilst a full re-opening of the Alloa-Dunfermline line was clearly recommended I appreciate this needs to wait its turn however, a full business case should be worked up now as significant house re-development has already been approved and is under construction without any change to an already struggling infrastructure. The West Fife region was promised so much after the mines closed and now Longannets closure has also been let down by the knock-on effect of the failure to deliver HS2. The lack of promised investment in the area, with many working at the due to close Grangemouth, could be improved with a new rail service that could have the same positive impact that the Borders and East of Fife has seen. The £5m Levelling Up funding and £3m for a new ferry all have disappeared, the estimated £3m of additional support as outlined by Transport Scotland here would benefit the whole of the East of Scotland, spreading wealth between the north and south and helping develop our smaller cities. Our fragile tourist industry to the historic and picturesque West Fife has been underserved for decades making it almost impossible to see Culross, Dunfermline, and St Andrews without a car.

With the green freeport investment reviewing the Rosyth Dockyard Railway Halt for passengers and freight, and the potential to improve junctions and offerings into the port and West Fife villages already underway with support of government and private

investment, now is the time to review the express offering alongside the Alloa-Dunfermline line.

Dunfermline's ancient capital status is underserved by rail, cuts beyond even those proposed by Beeching to remove our main station and lines out to West Fife and north to Perth in the past still hits commuters now, meaning crushing at peak times, too many cancelations, and no ability to grow with our fellow cities despite being the birthplace of the most successful and industry leading rail tycoon, Andrew Carnegie.

Across Europe the size and status of your local community means something. Each city is connected directly, smaller communities are provided stations, investment in infrastructure is a right delivered to those who need it. All the same arguments that met the Inter7City programme which has changed Scottish rail travel. It should now reach all 8 of Scotland's cities, make the Inter8City programme part of this new procurement from its inception.