

Inverclyde

Timetable Consultation

Feedback Report

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Timetable Consultation

In the autumn of 2023, ScotRail held a public consultation on proposed timetable improvements for services between Glasgow and Gourock, and Wemyss Bay.

These changes were designed to improve rail travel's competitiveness against driving. The aim is to achieve this by improving reliability, providing direct services between the communities people want to travel to, and reducing journey times where car and train were equally matched. Developing a new timetable also provides the opportunity to improve connections between rail and ferry services at both Gourock and Wemyss Bay.

During 2023, the number of passengers using rail services in Inverclyde increased by 27 per cent compared to the previous year. This growth is consistent with that experienced across the entire ScotRail network.

ScotRail believes the proposed timetable, with 30 more services each weekday, will stimulate faster growth by making it easier for communities in Inverclyde to access employment, education, health and leisure facilities, both within the region and in Glasgow.

Proposed Timetable

The proposed June 2024 timetable introduces a completely new Monday to Saturday timetable between Wemyss Bay, Gourock, and Glasgow. This will provide a half hourly service between Glasgow and Wemyss Bay during the day, and faster trains between Glasgow and Gourock.

Glasgow to Gourock

Two trains per hour until after the evening peak calling at Paisley Gilmour Street, Bishopton, Port Glasgow, Bogston, and then all stations to Gourock, taking approximately 41 minutes.

Additional services will operate at peak times.

The last limited stop trains are:

- 19:26 from Gourock to Glasgow.
- 18:35 from Glasgow to Gourock.

In the evening, two trains per hour continue to operate and now call at all stations between Glasgow and Gourock. The last service from Glasgow to Gourock remains 23:50.

Glasgow to Wemyss Bay

Two trains per hour operate all day until 19:00. These call at all stations and have an end-to-end journey time of approximately 59 minutes.

In the evening after 19:00, an hourly limited stop service operates calling at Paisley Gilmour Street, Bishopton, Port Glasgow, Whinhill, Drumfrochar, Branchton, and Inverkip.

The last service from Glasgow to Wemyss Bay will be at 22:55 compared to the current 22:35.

Additional services on Sunday afternoons between Gourock and Glasgow were introduced in December 2023. No other changes are proposed to the Sunday timetable as it is consistent with other routes in and around Glasgow and Strathclyde.

Full details of the services, including draft timetables, is available at <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/ayrshire-and-inverclyde-timetable-consultation>

Consultation Methodology

All existing customers and potential future rail users were invited to participate in the consultation between 9 October and 20 November 2023. An information pack was provided on the ScotRail website and was also available for collection at ScotRail stations. The consultation was well publicised through local media and elected members.

ScotRail also engaged directly with Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and other key stakeholders, and made an email address available for staff to submit their views.

Responses could either be made by submitting a form via the ScotRail website, or by hard copy and posting it to the customer contact centre.

What did our customers say?

We received 827 complete responses from customers and nine responses from stakeholders. A total of 750 customer responses included one or more written comments. This compares to 29 responses received from Inverclyde customers during the national consultation for the May 2022 timetable.

Each week there is currently around 75,000 passenger journeys on ScotRail services between Glasgow, Gourock, and Wemyss Bay. The response rate is reasonable given the number of customers using rail services in the region. The Edinburgh to Fife and Tay Cities timetable consultation, also held in autumn 2023, had a similar response level in proportion to weekly passenger journeys.

The table below summarises how the 827 respondents viewed the impact of the proposed timetable on their journey. We have split responses into the three broad geographical areas served by the timetable: Gourock and North Inverclyde (which accounts for around 34 per cent of rail passenger journeys); Wemyss Bay and west Inverclyde (accounting for around 13 per cent of passenger journeys); and east Inverclyde and Renfrewshire (accounting for around 53 per cent of journeys).

Will the proposed 2024 timetable have a positive or negative impact on your journey?	Gourock to Bogston (c34% of journeys)	Wemyss Bay to Whinhill (c13% of journeys)	Port Glasgow to Glasgow (c53% of journeys)	Total
Both	2%	3%	1%	6%
Negatively	7%	13%	5%	25%
Neither	11%	13%	5%	29%
Positively	23%	11%	5%	39%
Grand Total	44%	41%	16%	100%

The table clearly shows that there were relatively few responses from the busiest section of the corridor. This is probably because the service at most stations is unchanged – every station continues to receive a half hourly service, except the busier stations of Port Glasgow and Bishopton. These would now have a four trains per hour service, compared to the current three.

The number of responses from customers on the Wemyss Bay and east Inverclyde corridor is disproportionately high compared to passenger demand. This highlights that the proposal of more services, but a slower journey time, attracted stronger views from the local community.

ScotRail has reviewed every written response submitted and considered how the feedback can best be incorporated into the 2024 timetable.

Detailed feedback on proposed timetable

The majority of respondents (39 per cent) considered the timetable proposals would have a positive impact on their journey, with 29 per cent considering there would be no improvement, and 25 per cent stating a negative impact. The detailed feedback received can be categorised into four main themes:

Early morning services: Fifty-nine responses complained about the lack of early morning services from Woodhall, Langbank and Paisley St James to Glasgow. A further 14 responses requested the first service from Wemyss Bay to Glasgow arrives earlier than the proposed time of 07:30. Unfortunately operating an earlier service has a negative impact to other services in the morning peak which carry significantly more passengers. ScotRail will continue to explore options to provide an earlier arrival into Glasgow from Wemyss Bay.

Journey time: Two hundred and fifty-six responses complained that journey times to Glasgow were too long. Forty-three responses were from customers out with the region who travel infrequently to stations in Inverclyde. One hundred and two customers from stations such as Gourock, Greenock West and Central, Port Glasgow, and Bishopton, who benefit from a



much faster half hourly daytime service to Glasgow, also felt the journey time wasn't quick enough. ScotRail has timetabled all trains to operate as quickly as possible, whilst delivering a safe, reliable, and punctual service.

Ninety-seven customers from stations between Wemyss Bay and Whinhill, whose services will now call at all stations in Renfrewshire complained about the increase in journey time they will experience.

Two potential solutions to reducing journey time are, either to reduce the frequency of calls at some stations from half-hourly to hourly, or operating more train services. Neither of these options are sustainable solutions. The former would reduce access to public transport for the affected communities. While the option of operating more services result in an increased burden on the public purse as the number of people travelling wouldn't cover the cost.

The only practicable means of providing a limited stop service from the Wemyss Bay area to Glasgow is to retain the current timetable on this route and divert the extra service proposed to Gourock. In order to provide all stations in Renfrewshire with a half hourly service, two of the Gourock services each hour would have to call at all stations as they do now. The additional third service could be limited stop to Glasgow. This would result in a bunching of services across the hour, compared with the even interval between arrivals and departures at all stations in the route with the proposed timetable.

For example, Gourock would have two departures within ten minutes of each other, then a thirty-minute gap for the next service and then a twenty-minute gap. While customers between Bogston and Gourock would have three trains per hour, the limited stop service would be the most attractive and this would almost certainly be crowded at busy times.

ScotRail believes more people will use rail for both local journeys, and travel to Glasgow with the proposed timetable. This means a half-hourly limited stop service between Gourock and Glasgow and a half-hourly service between Wemyss Bay and Glasgow, which calls at all stations in the corridor. The timetable also provides an effective interchange at Port Glasgow for customers wishing to travel to north Inverclyde from stations in Renfrewshire.

Specific customer feedback identified the 07:28 Wemyss Bay to Glasgow service as being the key service used by commuters from west Inverclyde. ScotRail has reviewed the structure of the timetable and reduced the journey time of this service from the proposed 57 to 50 minutes. This service can now depart Wemyss Bay at 07:35. All stations continue to have the same number of calls in the morning peak as originally proposed but the journey time of some morning services from Glasgow to Wemyss Bay increases as a result.

ScotRail will continue to review the timetable to identify further opportunities to reduce journey times for customers travelling at the busiest times of day, while maintaining the frequency of service to keep rail an attractive transport choice.

Frequency: One hundred and five respondents stated that the frequency of service wasn't sufficient, of which 39 were customers who use Langbank. We have explained in a previous section above how we will increase the number of services at this station in the early morning.

Independent experts advise that an hourly service is the minimum required to make public transport a viable choice for commuting and leisure journeys. A half-hourly service is much more attractive – but doesn't double the number of people who might use public transport.

Under the proposed timetable, all stations in Inverclyde receive a half-hourly daytime service level. Most have additional services at peak times. In the current timetable, Wemyss Bay, Inverkip, Branchton, Drumfrochar and Whinhill receive an hourly service with an additional train operating at peak times.

Theoretically, the Gourock to Glasgow services could call at more stations between Port Glasgow and Glasgow. ScotRail considers more customers will use rail as a result of the faster journey times from north Inverclyde, compared to increasing the daytime frequency from two to three or four trains per hour at Cardonald, Hillington East, Hillington West, Paisley St James, Langbank, and Woodhall.

ScotRail will monitor how passenger demand continues to grow at every station on the corridor and propose further adjustments to the timetable to encourage growth in passenger use.

Ferry connections: 68 customer expressed concern about ferry connections at Gourock and Wemyss Bay.

Calmac has confirmed retimings of Dunoon ferry services in the summer 2024 timetable to provide an efficient interchange between rail and ferry at Dunoon. This provides a 20-minute connection times for journeys to Dunoon and 25 minutes for journeys to Glasgow. There are a small number of connections that are as short as nine minutes, but we have not had complaints about similarly short connections in the current timetable. In the off-peak, most ScotRail services arrive and depart from platform one at Gourock station to assist the ease of interchange.



The half-hourly service between Glasgow and Wemyss Bay improves connection resilience in the event of rail or ferry disruption.

Conclusion

ScotRail received more than 800 responses to the consultation requesting customer feedback on a new timetable proposed for Inverclyde in June 2024.

There are around 75,000 passenger journeys to and from the Inverclyde stations each week. The response rate is significantly higher than in the national timetable consultation held in autumn 2021, and comparable with that received for a consultation on Edinburgh to Fife, Perth and Dundee services held at a similar time.

The majority of respondents were positive or neutral about the proposals. The largest complaint theme related to longer journey times, particularly from communities on the Wemyss Bay line. However, there was only 22 more negative responses compared to the positive ones, and as many neutral as negative.

ScotRail believes the proposed timetable structure will result in more people using rail across Inverclyde both for local journeys, and trips to Glasgow. The proposal is to introduce the timetable as planned, with the following improvements:

- The 05:25 and 06:00 Gourock to Glasgow services each morning will call additionally at Woodhall, Langbank and Paisley St James.
- The 07:28 Wemyss Bay to Glasgow service, the busiest morning peak service from this part of Inverclyde, will be retimed to depart at 07:35 and have a 50-minute journey time to Glasgow.

ScotRail will continue to review the timetable to identify further opportunities to reduce journey times for customers travelling at the busiest times of day, while maintaining the frequency of service to keep rail an attractive transport choice.