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Fife and the Tay Cities

Timetable Consultation

Feedback Report

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Timetable Consultation

In the autumn of 2023, ScotRail held a public consultation on a series of proposed timetable improvements for services between Edinburgh, Fife, Perth and Dundee.

Customers were asked for their preference of two possible interim timetable options, which could be introduced in 2024, and for detailed feedback on how well the planned timetable for 2025 will meet local travel needs. All timetables included services to the new stations at Cameron Bridge and Leven, which will open in June this year.

ScotRail recognises the quality of service provided in Fife, particularly at peak times, has fallen far short of what our customers expect and deserve. Outwith the periods where services have been disrupted due to extreme weather, the number of carriages provided at peak times, and the reliability of services has been improving since the start of 2024. There is still some way to go but this phased approach will ensure that we operate a reliable train service across all of Fife when the Levenmouth line reopens. This is essential in making rail an attractive mode of transport and ensuring that the new stations at Leven and Cameron Bridge are a success.

The reopening of the Levenmouth rail link will deliver a major boost to economic sustainability and transport connectivity in this part of Fife. It will deliver opportunities for local people, unlocking access to education, culture, entertainment, and employment options, as well attracting new business and investment.

Timetables

Two interim timetable options were presented for introduction in 2024:

- Option A provides Leven with two trains per hour to Edinburgh via Cowdenbeath and Dunfermline as an extension of existing services.
- Option B provides Leven with an hourly service to Edinburgh via Kirkcaldy, reduces journey times between Edinburgh and north Fife and Dundee and provides more evening services across Fife.

A third timetable, planned to be introduced in 2025, was also presented. This is based on interim Option B and added a second train per hour to Leven as an extension of the Edinburgh to Glenrothes with Thornton via Dunfermline service.

Full details of the services, including draft timetables, is available at <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/about-scotrail/future-timetables/fife-and-tay-cities-timetable-consultation>

Consultation Methodology

All existing customers and potential future rail users were invited to participate in the consultation between 11 September and 23 October 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, on information screens at stations and through elected members.

ScotRail also engaged directly with Fife Council, 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 701 complete responses from customers and 14 responses from stakeholders. A total of 556 customer responses included one or more written comments. This compares to 521 received for Fife, Perth, and Dundee during the national consultation for the May 2022 timetable. Demand at the main stations on the route has still only recovered to an average of 85 per cent of 2019/2020 levels, although the general upward trajectory shows that more and more people are using the railway in Fife.

The majority of responders stated the planned timetable for 2025 would have a positive impact on their travel needs.

Will the proposed 2025 timetable have a positive or negative impact on your journey?

No answer	1%
Both	11%
Negatively	14%
Neither	15%
Positively	59%
Grand Total	100%

ScotRail has reviewed every written response submitted and considered how the feedback can best be incorporated into the 2025 timetable.

Interim timetable for 2024

The majority of those responding preferred Option B for introduction in 2024. Of those, 260 (37 per cent) were from customers who stated they would travel to/from Leven and Cameron Bridge when these stations open. Customers who accessed rail from other stations in Fife, Perth and Dundee made up the remaining 441 responses (63 per cent).

Which interim timetable option will best meet your travel needs?	Customers using other stations	Customers intending to use Cameron Bridge or Leven	Total
No answer	2%	1%	2%
Interim Timetable A	9%	13%	22%
Interim Timetable B	27%	15%	42%
Neither will improve my journeys	21%	2%	23%
They will both improve my journeys	5%	6%	11%
Grand Total	63%	37%	100%

Customers planning to use the new stations had less of a preference for either timetable, but overall there will still a clear preference for Option B. As a result, ScotRail will introduce this timetable option when the new route opens for passenger service in June 2024.

Detailed feedback on planned timetable for 2025

Customers who use Dundee, Leuchars, Cupar, Ladybank and Markinch stations accounted for 87 responses. From those, 66 customers advised support for the Dundee to Edinburgh service calling at fewer stations in Fife and reducing the overall journey time. However, 21 customers advised a preference for the train calling at all stations. There is not enough passenger demand to sustain more than one such service each hour, so ScotRail will introduce the new timetable as proposed, with the Dundee to Edinburgh service not stopping at Kinghorn, Burntisland, Aberdour, Dalgety Bay, North Queensferry and Dalmeny.



A limited stop service between Edinburgh and Perth was requested in 23 responses, with a further 36 requesting the reintroduction of a Fife Circle service to enable direct journeys between Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy. ScotRail has received feedback on both these issues on a number of occasions since the current timetable structure was introduced in 2022.

As part of the development work for these timetables, the operation of a semi-fast service to Perth instead of Dundee was explored. This didn't reduce journey times from north Fife to Edinburgh to the same extent as the Dundee service and required an extra train. This would have meant less seats being provided at peak times and worsened the journey experience for customers in other parts of Fife.

Introducing an hourly Fife Circle service would require at least three additional trains to be leased and would increase the subsidy required from the public purse by £2.5 million to £3 million per year. This timetable structure would improve east – west connectivity within Fife and enable limited stop services to operate from Edinburgh to both Perth and Dundee. Should passenger demand continue to grow strongly, then the affordability of this option will be re-considered when suitable trains are available to lease.

There were eight responses asking for a station at Newburgh. ScotRail has forwarded those responses to the Regional Transport Partnership, which is currently investigating a new station in this area.

A small number of responses asked for a direct service between Leven, Cameron Bridge, and South Gyle. In the 2025 timetable, this is provided on the service via Dunfermline. Unfortunately, the turnaround time of the services between Edinburgh and Leven via Kirkcaldy means that this is not possible.

A small number of responses asked for a direct service from Leven to Dundee. However, the junction at Thornton faces south, meaning that we can operate direct services to Edinburgh but not Dundee. ScotRail will look at improving connections at Kirkcaldy to make it easier for future customers to change trains onto a service heading north to Dundee or Perth.

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.

A number of comments were received on the fact that arrivals at Leven are not evenly spaced across the hour. Unfortunately, this is a consequence of operating one train on each side of the Fife Circle – the route via Dunfermline is longer and slower due to more station stops and a lower linespeed compared to the route via Kirkcaldy. Trains need to arrive and depart at Edinburgh at consistent times and also provide as close to a 30-minute interval between calls at intermediate stations as possible, meaning services tend to arrive at Leven close to one another. When preparing the final timetable for 2025, ScotRail will review more options to understand if it is possible to achieve a better interval between arrivals at Leven.

Outwith peak periods, the proposed 2025 timetable provides an hourly service to Lochgelly, Cardenden, and Glenrothes with Thornton. Feedback was received from customers to increase the number of services at these stations. When preparing the final timetable for 2025, ScotRail will review more options to understand if it is possible to call more trains at these stations.

Conclusion

ScotRail received more than 700 responses to the consultation for an improved timetable between Edinburgh, Fife, Perth, and Dundee. This is planned to be introduced in two phases.

Of the two interim options presented for 2024, 42 per cent of responders preferred Option B, compared to 22 per cent for Option A. ScotRail will introduce the Option B timetable in June 2024 when the Levenmouth rail link opens for passenger service. This provides Leven with an hourly service to Edinburgh via Kirkcaldy, reduces journey times between Edinburgh and north Fife and Dundee and provides more evening services across Fife.

Relating to the planned timetable for 2025, 59 per cent of responders advised it would improve their rail journey. ScotRail



will now undertake a further review of the 2025 timetable to try and improve the interval of services arriving at Leven and to provide more services at Lochgelly, Cardenden, and Glenrothes with Thornton.