

SCOTTISH SENIORS



Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

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The SPF invites you to Meet our Affiliates

SUPPORT A PUBLIC FUTURE FOR SCOTLAND'S RAILWAY

Article by John and Christine McGiveron

This is a new venture for the Scottish Branch of the Civil Service Pensioners Alliance. As a non-political and lobbying organisation and an affiliate to the Scottish Pensioners' Forum, 'the recognised and respected voice of pensioners in Scotland, 'we are proud to work together in a joint approach to support each other in our mutual concerns about pensioner matters affecting every pensioner in Scotland.

We campaign with the SPF on such issues as pensions, health and social care, housing, policing, loneliness and isolation to name but a few.

Our current campaign with the SPF calls for the retention of the Concessionary Travel Scheme (The Bus Pass) and for it to include train and ferry travel, and we have all been involved in the recent Concessionary Travel Scheme Consultation carried out by Transport Scotland for the Scottish Government.

The Alliance, in conjunction with the SPF, are in ongoing talks with the Scottish Transport Minister, Humza Yousaf, regarding the concessionary scheme. However since privatisation the transport network has become fragmented, and nowhere is this more obvious than the railway system. Very few, if any, of the privatised rail companies within the UK recycles its total profits for the benefits of the passengers and infrastructure. UK railway companies are foreign owned thus profits are used for the enhancement of their own networks with dividends going to shareholders. The French National railway company SNCF has recently submitted a franchise bid to run HS2.



So who owns rail transport in Scotland?

Abellio is a Netherlands company. Its operations span three countries within the European Union covering bus train and tram operations. In the UK they operate buses in London and Surrey and rail services in Scotland, Greater Anglia and Merseyside with SERCO. In Germany Abellio operate Abellio Deutschland serving communities in Westphalia, Saxony and Thuringia. They also operate Qbuzz buses in the Netherlands in Fryslan, Groningen, Drenched, and Utrecht.

In Scotland Abellio owns no rolling stock. It leases all its trains from Porterbrook and Brodie Leasing, the former Barclay locomotive works in Kilmarnock. Whilst Abellio operates stations in Scotland it does not own them. The majority of the



'rail infrastructure and facilities work should be in-house under public ownership'

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340 stations are owned by Network Rail, some of the exceptions to this are: Prestwick Airport, owned by the airport, Dunbar owned by East Coast Trains and Glasgow Central, Glasgow Queen Street, and Edinburgh Waverly, owned and operated by Network Rail.

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There are also other operators who run on Scotland's rail network. Caledonian Sleeper operated by SERCO, Cross Country operated by Arriva UK Trains, Virgin West Coast operated by Virgin Rail Group and East Coast Trains operated by Virgin East Coast and Stagecoach who are the majority stakeholders

However on 24th June 2018 the franchise to run the East Coast Mainline was re-nationalised and rebranded as London and North Eastern Railway (LNER). The original LNER was created by the Railways Act of 1921 and operated from January 1st 1923 until Nationalisation of the rail network in January 1948. It was the second largest of the operators, the largest being the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMSR).

Do you know about the Passenger Assist Service?

A 68 page document entitled 'On Track for 2020 – The Future of Accessible Rail Travel' published in May 2015, was commissioned by Anne Frye, an international specialist on the transport and mobility needs of disabled and older people; Matthew Smith, a former Train Operating Company (TOC) Accessibility Manager and qualified Transport Planner and Peter Rayner who is the Transport Adviser to the National Pensioners Convention and Greater London Forum. The Document states that research of 350 disabled people throughout the UK found that only "10% had seen, heard or read information from train operators about disabled passengers' rights to assistance .70% of respondents were unaware of any help available and only 9% had heard of the Passenger Assist service."



What does 'accessible' mean ?

Unfortunately it can never be an 'absolute measure'. Disabled and/or mobility impaired people will have their own ideas about 'what works for them'. There are, however many factors that impact on disabled and mobility impaired accessibility to a train or a station. The Document lists the following:-



'**Overcrowding**; overcrowding at peak times will affect the ability of many of many disabled and older people to board and to travel in comfort. There is no Health and Safety legislation governing the amount of people carried in a railway carriage.

'**Availability of seats**; for those people unable to stand on a moving train if the service is busy and some units have a reduced number of seats to increase overall carrying capacity.

'**Availability of wheelchair spaces**; as train travel becomes more accessible and more wheelchair users have the confidence to use the train, one inevitable consequence from time to time will be that all available wheelchair spaces are taken. This applies particularly on trains with only small vestibules at each end of the vehicle and therefore lacking the flexibility to accommodate additional wheelchair users. This is also exacerbated by luggage, pushchairs and bicycles stowed in the wheelchair space.

'**On board information**; for sight and hearing impaired people, dependent on either visual or audible on-board information, the absence of this facility (because it is out of order or has not been switched on or correctly programmed) can be distressing and stressful. A lack of on-board staff particularly on driver only services, can add to the anxiety this causes.'

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Unstaffed stations or stations with restricted staffing hours; 'assistance may only be available at limited times if at all.'

'Weather; poor weather conditions can affect a disabled or older person's ability to walk any distance or to wait on a station platform.'

Availability of suitable accessible toilets at stations and on trains/ badly placed equipment; 'a frequent problem for people who need an accessible toilet is the careless placement of rubbish bins and other equipment which can make it impossible to manoeuvre successfully.'

'Platform slopes; can be a problem for people with mobility difficulties and are potentially dangerous both for wheelchair users and travellers with baby buggies.

'Boarding and alighting; a number of design and operational factors can affect the ability of many disabled and older people to board and alight from trains. These include; absence of a ramp, short platforms and big vertical and/or horizontal gaps between platform and train in particular Pendolino and Voyager units.

'Availability of staff (on the train and on the station) both to give physical assistance and information/reassurance.'



In conclusion, many of the factors stated above are basic common sense Customer Care issues and can be rectified with a bit of thought and consideration, however if rail transportation continues to be run with minimal staffing and services in order to maximise private profit the travelling public will lose out and the general economic development of our society will be weakened.

CSPA Scotland Branch Sends Greetings

To all members and visitors attending SPF Annual Conference and AGM 2018

We are an international non - profit lobbying organisation who operate in England, Wales, N.Ireland, Scotland and Malta with our headquarters based in London. Our members are predominantly retired civil servants who are in receipt of their Civil Service Pension.

Our Scotland Branch has its own Manifesto and we are delighted to be affiliated to the Scottish Pensioners Forum and we fully support and agree with your own Manifesto. We very much enjoy working alongside you in lobbying the Scottish Parliament, MP's, MSP's, and campaigning for the benefit of all Scottish pensioners.



We are aware that many of your members are also members of the Alliance, but should any who are not, wish to make further enquiries, please access our Scottish Website detailed below for more information. Find out if you are eligible and join to enjoy the many benefits available to our members, especially our extremely popular travel insurance.

John McGiveron
Chairman

Christine McGiveron
Administrator



www.cspascotland.org.uk



From The Sunday Times Rich List 2018

Brian Souter and his sibling Ann Gloag, founders of Stagecoach, share £825 million according to The Sunday Times Rich List 2018. It goes on to say, 'the pair are generous charity donors, supporting health, education and humanitarian projects.' Richard Branson and family share £4,525 billion according to the Rich List. It states that 'Branson, always looking at the stars, hopes to send his first passengers into space this year.'

Just sayin'

The Scottish Pensioners Forum are always keen to hear about what our members are getting up to, so don't be shy, please get in touch. The more we know, the more we can help publicise your event and help get you the recognition (and audience) you deserve for your hard work and effort. So whether it's an event in your local area or you are planning a campaign on a much larger scale we'd like to hear about what you're doing on behalf of older people.



If there is something you would like us to include in our next newsletter, for example a certain forthcoming event or a particular issue you are campaigning on, please get in touch with us to have your say.

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