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BEATTOCK STATION ACTION GROUP



The Public Demand for Beattock Station

October 2013

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Executive Summary

Context

Beattock is a transport hub in rural south-west Scotland, situated on the West Coast Main Line, which runs from London to Glasgow. The railway provides direct access to Edinburgh and is frequently used by freight trains. The M74 motorway from Glasgow to the English border at Gretna runs near the line.

The Southern Upland Way, Scotland's famous 212-mile coast-to-coast walk, passes through Beattock, which is also on the National Cycle Network.

Beattock Station was opened on 1 September 1847 by the Caledonian Railway and became part of the London Midland and Scottish Railway company in 1923. Although it survived the closures in the 1960s, it was closed as part of the electrification and modernisation of the West Coast main line on 3 January 1972.

After the Scottish government announced that a £30 million fund would be available to reopen stations on the Scottish rail network between 2014 and 2019, the Beattock Station Action Group (BSAG) was formed in May 2012.

BSAG aims to achieve positive and imaginative development of Beattock Station in ways that will benefit the communities served by it.

The group has created a dedicated website www.beattock.com and is researching funding opportunities and potential service provision.

Introduction

An important part of BSAG's continuing research is to find out the level of public demand for a station.

This report describes the main findings of a survey, which BSAG carried out over a six-month period in 2012–13 to find out people's views on the proposal to reopen Beattock Station. In particular, respondents were asked whether they supported the reopening of the station and to say how this could benefit them and the wider community.

The information was collected in two basic formats: ticked boxes for data and open questions for opinions and feedback. It was sent out via Facebook, BSAG's website, Moffat Academy, local house delivery, street stalls, a Christmas Fair and local shops.

Main findings

BSAG received 643 completed questionnaires, including 100 from young people aged 15 to 17 at the local high school, Moffat Academy. There was an overwhelming response in favour of reopening the station, with 640 people supporting the proposal.

Sixty-one per cent of adults were from Beattock, Moffat and the surrounding areas. A total of 471 people said they would travel to and from the station for leisure, 131 for commuting and 82 for other business reasons. Glasgow was the top destination, followed closely by Edinburgh, then Carlisle, London and Manchester. Nearly 230 adults said they would use a train from Beattock weekly and 106 said they would use it daily.

Respondents thought more than 50 benefits could result from the reopening of Beattock Station. For individuals, these included access to cities and the rail network, less reliance on cars and more opportunities to visit their families. People felt the wider community would benefit from increased tourism, employment regeneration and improved commuting.

Almost all the pupils at Moffat Academy (99%) supported the reopening of Beattock Station. Their responses were different in some respects from those of the adults, as 94% said they would use Beattock Station for leisure and 6% for travelling to university or college. They would be more likely than adults to use the station monthly.

The young people felt the most important benefit to individuals was the convenience of a local station. They also highlighted greater independence, with more activities available via railways and the ability to stay out in the city for longer. Whilst they are not currently used to frequent or local rail travel, they clearly support the idea of reopening Beattock Station and are aware of the changes it could bring to their lives.

Adults' responses

Support for Beattock Station

Of the 543 adults who filled in the questionnaire, all except two supported the reopening of Beattock Station.

Most respondents (61%) were from Moffat, Beattock and the surrounding areas (DG10 postcode). The remainder were mainly from other parts of Scotland, including Motherwell, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Forty-nine described themselves as businesspeople.

The age profile was split into four groups:

Under 21	35
21-50	188
51-65	203
Over 65	117

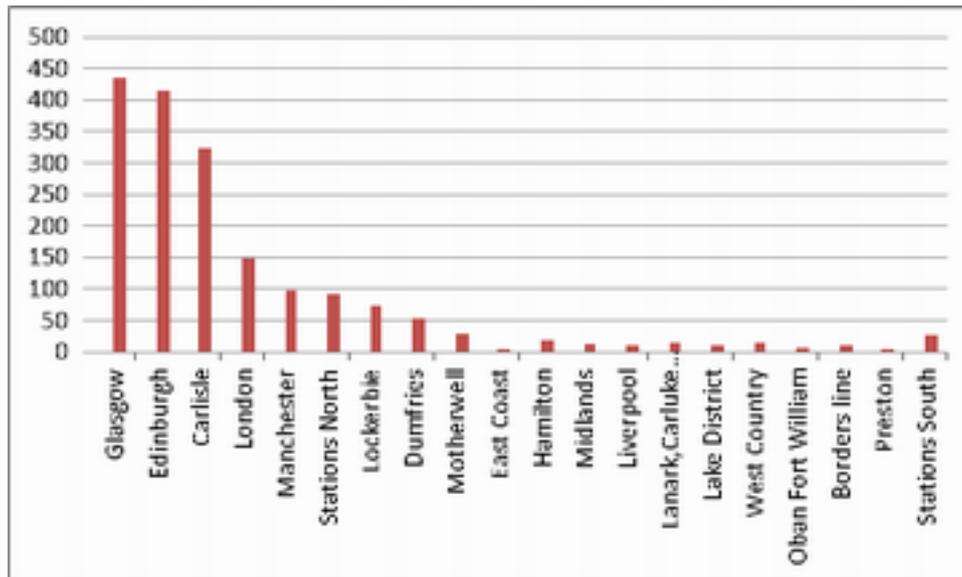
The respondents were asked what modes of transport they used at present. A breakdown of their answers follows below:

Car	406
Bus	160
Train	157
Bus or car to Lockerbie	74
Motorbike	10
Aeroplane	10
Taxi	9
Walk	8
Cycle	6

It is interesting to note that even though there is no local station, nearly 30% of respondents already use the train and 74 said they travelled by car or bus to Lockerbie Station.

Leisure was the most popular reason why people might travel to and from Beattock Station (471 responses). A significant number (131) said they would commute and 82 said they would travel for other business reasons.

They were asked to specify up to five stations where they would travel to. Glasgow was the top destination, followed closely by Edinburgh, then Carlisle, London and Manchester.



More than a third of respondents (229) said they would use Beattock Station weekly, while 106 would use it daily and 176 monthly. This indicates that most people would use the station frequently rather than occasionally.

BSAG's findings are reflected in the re-establishment of other small stations in Scotland, which have all been used much more frequently than expected. For example, 64,000 passengers – almost double the number predicted – used Laurencekirk Station in rural Aberdeenshire in the first year after it reopened in 2009.

Eighty-eight per cent of adults (479) said a bus link, aligned to train times, would be essential. Although they were not asked about this, 42 suggested in addition that a car park would be useful. This indicates that there is a demand for a park and ride transport system, which would be expected to increase the passenger numbers further.

Benefits for adult respondents

The 543 adult respondents suggested 39 ways in which reopening Beattock Station would benefit them individually. The five most popular answers are listed below:

- Access to cities
- Access to rail network
- Access to and from Moffat
- Less reliance on, and use of, the car
- Visiting family

The two most popular – access to cities and the rail network – were each suggested by nearly 180 people. More than 100 said the location of the station near to Moffat was an important benefit, making it easier for commuting, shopping and leisure.

In addition, more than 50 people said the station could lead to employment regeneration both in and outside the area. Other comments included increased tourism, lower environmental impact, saving fuel and money, easier access to education, better travel for young families and improved rural access. Some highlighted the heritage value of the station and its interest to railway enthusiasts.

Benefits to the wider community

More than a third of respondents thought the most significant benefit to the wider local and business community would be an increase in tourism. The top five answers are listed below:

- Increase in tourism
- Access to cities
- Stimulate local business
- Use a local station
- Commuting opportunities

These show that people recognise the importance of tourism and see the value for businesses in reopening Beattock Station. In addition, many people said the station

would give people more and cheaper travel options, encourage businesses to move to the area and attract conferences and other events, leading to better employment opportunities.

In total, respondents suggested 45 different benefits to the wider local and business community. Others included giving non-drivers an alternative to bus transport, retaining the local population, improving hillwalking access and supporting taxi firms in the area.

Nearly 100 people highlighted commuting opportunities.

Benefits for commuters

Respondents were also asked how they thought reopening Beattock Station would benefit commuters. The five most popular answers were:

- Save journey time
- Access to cities
- Trains at commuting times
- Less reliance on, and use of, the car
- More local than Lockerbie

Nearly 160 people cited each of the first two responses, indicating that there is a strong demand for commuting by train from Beattock instead of having to drive to Lockerbie.

Many felt frustrated by having to rely on cars and the stress of driving to work on busy roads, and more than 50 thought it would be cheaper to travel by train. Nearly 60 said they would be able to save time by working on the train during their journey.

Some commented that it was difficult to find car parking spaces at Lockerbie Station and buses were occasionally overcrowded, particularly on the Dumfries to Glasgow run. They felt the reopening of Beattock Station would improve these issues.

Other benefits to commuters highlighted by the respondents included improved public transport, convenience, lower environmental impact, no traffic delays and less city parking.

Young people's responses

Support for Beattock Station

To enable young people aged 15–17 to give their views on the reopening of Beattock Station, BSAG took the survey to Moffat Academy and 100 completed questionnaires were returned.

A comparison of the school pupils' responses with those from the adults is interesting. There was a similarly strong response in favour of reopening Beattock Station to that expressed by the adults, with 99 out of 100 supporting the plans.

The young people, who all live in Moffat, Beattock or the surrounding areas, said they used the following modes of transport:

Bus	61
Car	53
Train	10
Bus to Lockerbie	5
Bicycle	5
Walk	4
Taxi	2
Lifts from friends	2

Regular rail travel is largely outside their experience, with only 10% saying they use the train at present. There was strong support for a bus link to Beattock Station; with 86 saying this would be essential.

Almost all the young people (94) said they would use the train for leisure, whilst six would use it to travel to university or college. They recognised the reopening of Beattock Station could have a huge impact on their lives. Some said this would give them opportunities to continue studying, by travelling to university each day from home, which would not be available to them otherwise.

Forty-six said they would travel monthly and 32 weekly. The most popular destination was Glasgow (65), followed by Carlisle and Edinburgh.

Benefits for young people

The 100 young people suggested 30 ways in which reopening Beattock Station would benefit them individually.

Top of the list were convenience (36), Beattock being more local than Lockerbie (30) and saving time (21).

Sixteen cited access to cities and 12 said Beattock was closer to home. This closeness is reflected in other comments about the station being “more local”; some thought it would be good for travelling to university or college and for visiting their families. Others said the railway would give them access to a wider range of activities and they would have more independence.

Benefits to the wider community

The young people suggested 55 benefits to the wider local and business community.

Many suggestions were similar to the adult responses, with an increase in tourism scoring highest (30). Convenience, employment regeneration, business growth, economic benefits, saving time and local access were also seen as important.

Some referred specifically to benefits for Beattock, with comments including “more money for Beattock” and “advantage to Beattock”, whereas the adult responses concentrated on the local area in general or Moffat in particular. Others said there would be more independence for young people and more travel options.

Benefits for commuters

The young people cited the convenience of the station to commuters (25) and the time saved (24) as the most important benefits. Saving money and fuel, offering an alternative to buses and close proximity to home were also seen as advantages.

Other comments included opportunities to commute to Beattock or Moffat and stay out later.

Next Steps

The survey has found an overwhelming public response in favour of the reopening of Beattock Station.

Both the adult respondents and the young people from Moffat Academy highlighted more than 50 benefits for individuals and the wider community.

BSAG will now submit this report to the Dumfries & Galloway Transport Partnership, Swestrans, which will decide whether to commission a Scottish Transport Appraisal Guide, report into the potential reopening of the station.

BSAG would like to thank everyone who contributed to the survey and in particular Peter Dreghorn, Ron McLean and Peter Gray, who devised and distributed the questionnaire and collated the results.



Beattock Station in the 1960's

For further details of the full content of our findings visit: www.beattock.com