

# SPOKES *The Lothian Cycle Campaign*

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## Please Lets Make Our Trains More Family Friendly!

Families groups with a child in pushchair or pram face a particular problem using our trains. If you are travelling with a child in a buggy or, say, golf clubs or a bicycle, it is often difficult and sometimes impossible to get on a train *which otherwise has lots of empty seats*. If they can get on (and we've seen a family with pushchair being refused onto an off-peak train at Falkirk Grahamston) they can seldom sit close to the pushchair. If the child is asleep, the parent must stand and it makes it harder for the group to sit together. These are some of the comments on the *Mumsnet website*:

- *I am looking forward to the day I no longer need to travel with child and buggy on the train.*
- *I hate hate hate taking a buggy on trains*
- *I sometimes forget how awful it is and take xx on the train on a day trip. We inevitably end up stuck on the fold-down seat by the exit because there's nowhere else for the buggy to go..*

*Abellio Scotrail* have inherited a train fleet furnished almost entirely with rigid inflexible seating. However, the purchase of the new train fleet for central Scotland electrification (EGIP) represents a unique opportunity for a step change in the accessibility of Scotland's trains.

It is particularly important to act now to get the EGIP train specification right. The indications from the current consultation are that *Scotrail* is in favour of flexible use space. *Transport Scotland*, however, have the final say and appear to still favour maximising the number of fixed seats. More use of flexible use space is a win-win situation as:

- **It provides fairer equality of access and a welcome to Scotland's railway to a wider range of stakeholder groups, and**
- **There are acknowledged commercial and operational benefits.**

Our recommendation is that every coach of every train should have a multi-use flexible space. The *every coach* recommendation is important because families, understandably, get into the nearest coach and can't easily scurry along the platform.

**The EGIP Opportunity :** *The new EGIP trains are an opportunity to get this right from day one.*

We suggest that, as a minimum, there should be additional flexible use space at one end of each centre coach (TPS1 and TS1), consisting of six comfortable lateral fold-down seats beside the luggage stack. This flexible use space would replace the proposed combination of six standard and two sub-optimal rigid seats (the latter being both narrower and with much reduced pitch). Enormous flexibility is achieved at the expense of only two sub-optimal rigid seats per coach - seats which are never going to be comfortable to sit in!

### Many Passenger Benefits:

Such space would afford a welcome for:

- Commuters, as short distance seating or as standing space in the rush-hour. Flexible spaces are not a disadvantage to commuters on peak-time journeys, *Scotrail* having commented that groups of friends will currently often elect to stand and chat informally in the vestibules.
- Families with prams and pushchairs, with the benefit of being able to also sit nearby.
- Elderly people with walking aids or shopping trolleys.
- Golfers with golf clubs (common on East Lothian and Ayrshire trains)
- Passengers with bulky luggage
- Passengers with bicycles (giving extra flexibility).

### Real Commercial and Operational benefits:

As well as being helpful to passengers, there are also *commercial and operational advantages* to there being some flexible space in *every coach*, as:

- Station dwell times are less likely to be extended by the need to find the "right" coach
- It helps to keep vestibules clear and improves circulation throughout the train
- It encourages valuable extra discretionary off-peak revenue.

This is a much wider issue than merely how many bike spaces there are on a train, although that in itself is very important given the government's ambition greatly to increase cycle use for utility and for tourism.

**Flexible use space is a valuable opportunity to make our trains more family friendly.**



*Dutch train, with a useful mix of fixed and flexible seating*



*Scotrail train full of fixed seats*