

SPOKES

The Lothian Cycle Campaign

St. Martins Church, 232 Dalry Road, Edinburgh EH11 2JG 0131.313.2114 [answerphone] spokes@spokes.org.uk www.spokes.org.uk

If replying by email, please use... bikerail@spokes.org.uk

Bikes on Trains in Scotland – Update March 2019

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1. Summary:

Current Highlights:

- Fantastic new dedicated sports equipment and bike carrying coaches for Oban trains (See 3.1)
- EGIP electrification in central Scotland generally means more bike spaces overall. (See 4.1)

Current Major Concern:

- Serious bike carriage restrictions on the refurbished Inter-City HSTs (See 3.2)

Current Other Issues:

- Tandem/trailer ban – time for review (4.2)?
- Effective bike tethering on new electric trains (4.3)
- Haymarket Bike Park at capacity, now under review (4.4).
- Refurbishment plans for existing train fleet (4.5)

Other train operators news(see 5):

- *LNER* new Azuma trains to have much poorer bike capacity
- *Transpennine* (Edin/Glas to Manchester) bike reservations now compulsory
- *Caledonian Sleeper* withdrawal of extra peak period bike capacity

Some General Information (see 6):

- Best way to make on-line bike reservations
- Update on procedures where bikes abandoned at stations

Where to make comments, complements or complaints (see 7)

- How to contact your MSP, Transport Scotland, ScotRail and the other train companies running trains in Scotland.

2. Introduction:

2.1 Not all cyclists journeys are of the same type and there are differences between the customer journey experience for:

- "tourists" on long-distance rail routes
- "leisure" cyclists on off-peak local
- "utility/commuter" cyclists in suburban areas who wish to take their bike on the train with them
- "utility/commuter" cyclists who wish to park their bike at the station.

2.2 In general, we get strong feedback about the wish for *certainty*, particularly for long journeys with less frequent services; whereas for local journeys, the wish is for *predictability, capacity and convenience*.

2.3 As with the whole of the UK, bikes are carried free on all public train services operating in Scotland.

2.4 *ScotRail*, which is owned by Dutch rail operator Abellio, run the vast majority of the trains in Scotland and the bulk of this update covers this operator. In addition, cross-border services are operated by LNER, Virgin, Cross-country and Transpennine and the latest news is in section 5 below.

2.5 The [*Abellio ScotRail Cycle Innovation Plan*](#) sets out its vision and the active travel pitch it made to the Scottish Government when it bid for the ScotRail franchise.

2.6 *Spokes* recognises and welcomes that there has recently been and continues to be substantial investment in Scottish train services and although we have had and continue to have reservations about various issues surrounding bike carriage on trains, the overall picture is an improving one.

2.7 *ScotRail's* rolling stock fleet has been changing a lot recently, with the introduction of new electric train fleets and the disposal of some older diesel units. It is good news that, once all of the new electric trains have been delivered, there will have been a substantial net increase in the number of trains. No more diesel trains are to be disposed of and those retained are to be refurbished, where necessary.

2.8 Despite the spaces available for bikes on individual train types only slightly increasing, frequency will be increasing as will be the lengthening of services by more use of multiple unit trains. This will generally result in it being easier to find space for your bike, but does not cater for or encourage substantial increases in bike use.

2.9 *Spokes* is represented on the *ScotRail Cycle Forum*. If you have a topic you feel *Spokes* should raise, email bikerail@spokes.org.uk

3. Major Train projects:

3.1 Dedicated Coaches for Sports equipment and bikes, initially on the West Highland Line

This is happening, which is excellent and a fantastic response by Transport Scotland to lobbying by ourselves and others!

Two self-propelled CI 153 single coach units are currently being refurbished. These coaches will be attached to existing services, with an internal layout that is half seating and half bike storage for about 20 bikes.

About half the bike storage will be floor standing and the rest on wall mounts where we're told that only a small amount of lifting is required (the pic gives an indicative general idea).



Another 4 units will follow and there is the likelihood of use on the Far North Line.

3.2 New HST Inter City Trains: Edinburgh/Glasgow to/from Aberdeen/Inverness

+++*This is a topic there letters and emails from Spokes members would be helpful*+++

ScotRail's Intercity service is currently undergoing a massive change, with refurbished 4 or 5 coach HSTs replacing the 3-coach diesels (CI 170) on long distance services. Not all of the HST trains have yet been refurbished, so you might find yourself on a "[Classic](#)" (as they arrived from GWR) – or it might still be a CI 170!

Spokes welcomed the plan to use refurbished IC125 HSTs - especially the announcement made in a presentation at the Scottish Parliament (see pic) that these would each carry at least 20 bikes, made possible as the power cars each have a largely unused storage space.

Spokes is very disappointed that this 20+ space game-changer has been progressively diluted down to 8 spaces, 6 of which are to restricted to end-to-end journeys only!

This is very unsatisfactory, so say the least!

Bikes on trains

greater off-peak cycle capacity on trains:

- All trains will have at least 2 dedicated cycle spaces; all new and refurbished trains will additionally have multi-functional areas, creating space for seating, prams, wheelchairs as well as cycles.
- Reservation in advance through our 'journey companion' in line with ticket purchase, with information on whether a particular train has spare capacity.
- The Class 125s will have a capacity of at least 20 cycles.

A blue ScotRail Class 125 locomotive is shown in profile. It has the ScotRail logo and the text 'SCOTLAND'S RAILWAY' on its side. A white bicycle icon is visible on the side of the locomotive. The number '43118' is visible near the front.

Initially, there will only be one bike cupboard for two hanging bikes (see image, right) in one of the coaches.

That will be the only bike capacity for journeys to and from intermediate stations, including such important destinations as Stirling, Perth, Dundee and Aviemore.

Although a second second such space is to be added sometime in the future, that will also be hanging storage, which is difficult for many users.

If you are travelling end-to-end the current proposal is for 6 bikes in storage spaces in the power cars; currently as hanging storage, although we hope that that will change to horizontal storage.

During the current transitional period the these services continue to have a 2 bike limit.



ScotRail and *Transport Scotland* know that we are not happy about:

- the decrease in the promised “20 bike” capacity
- the end-to-end only restriction on the bulk of the reduced capacity
- the current and future bike storage, currently at least, all being hanging – which some find very difficult to use.

Whilst it is currently being investigated to see if bikes in the power car spaces can be stored horizontally (ie both wheels on the floor, no lifting), there are still no plans to allow these bikes to get on or off at intermediate stations.

This is all particularly serious on the Highland Line to stations like Pitlochry and Aviemore where there are no alternative local trains, unlike those that are planned for the Aberdeen line.

Why the end-to-end restriction? There’s a concern that bikes delay trains. *Spokes* considers that the delay fears attributable to loading cycles are over-pessimistic and has suggested a range of measures to address this.

If you share our concerns please consider contacting your MSP and ask them to write to the Minister (not Scotrail as this needs to be a **Transport Scotland decision).**

Perhaps tell your MSP about how you want to travel by train as a family, how important Speyside is as a holiday destination, how having to lift a bike onto a hook would be for you.

Find your MSP at www.writetothem.com

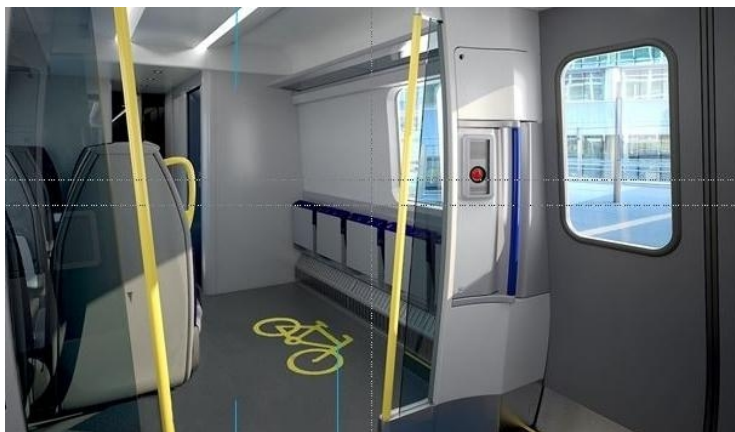
4. Other Ongoing Bike Rail Matters

4.1 Electrification in Central Scotland now almost complete.

Completion of EGIP electrification in central Scotland will generally mean both more and longer trains, **giving more bike spaces overall** (but without catering for or encouraging significant increases in bike use) between Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dunblane and Alloa.

Amazingly, that will mean six electrified train routes between Edinburgh and Glasgow:

Edinburgh and Glasgow QS via Falkirk High
Edinburgh and Glasgow QS via Falkirk Grahamston
Edinburgh and Glasgow QS via Falkirk Grahamston and Cumbernauld
Edinburgh and Glasgow QS Low Level via Livingston, Bathgate and Airdrie
Edinburgh and Glasgow Central via Shotts
Edinburgh and Glasgow via Carstairs



4.2 Tandems/trailers (currently banned) +++members letters would be helpful+++

The new electric trains have much longer bike zones (see pic above and right showing 2 tandems and a solo on a new electric train) which are comfortably long enough for a tandem or a bike trailer, highlighting that there should be a review of the current ban.

Incidentally, non-hanging bike storage in the HST power-cars would likely also be suitable for tandems/trailers.

Tandems are particularly suited to families and the visually impaired.



This is a ScotRail operational matter, so if you'd like to see tandems/trailers allowed **please consider writing to ScotRail Customer Services. (See Section 6)**

4.3 Inadequate bike tethering on CI 385:

Additional bike tethering straps have been requested. The existing seatbelt type are too short and involve reaching down quite far to reach the clip-in end, which is awkward (or not very visible) if several bikes were present.

The metal loop in the "flexible use area", by the accessible toilet, could usefully be fitted with a tethered velcro strap for attaching things like pushchairs and bikes and this has been requested. This space was described in the launch press release as: [Flexible multi-use area \(prams, bikes etc\)](#)

4.4 Haymarket Bike Park

The need for additional bike parking at Haymarket has been identified and ScotRail has arranged a feasibility survey. Spokes has suggested some locations where quick temporary fixes could be located. It's been reported that the repair point unit needs repair, with missing allen keys and a broken pump.

4.5 Refurbishment of existing train fleet.

It's good news that, although some diesel trains were transferred to other parts of the UK having been displaced by new electric trains, there is an overall increase in the number of trains. All of the retained diesel trains, if not previously refurbished will be in due course. That will hopefully see the removal of the, very hard to use, end-in cycle cupboards on some CI 158s.

We'd also like to see cycle storage on the CI 170s standardised to have a cycle zone in each of the end coaches, when some currently only have one.

5. News about other train operators

5.1 LNER (Aberdeen/Inverness to London)

On *LNER*, new *Azuma* trains are being introduced on the East Coast route (Aberdeen, Inverness and Edinburgh to London). These will only have small compartments for *hanging* bikes. Lost will be the large bike zones on the existing trains and a tandem ban is now likely. On a 5 carriage train there are 2 spaces and on both a 9 or 10 carriage train there will be 4.

5.2 Transpennine (Edinburgh/Glasgow to Manchester)

On *Transpennine* (Edinburgh/Glasgow to Manchester) bike reservations now compulsory, even for short journeys. Bikes can not now be taken on, even if the spaces are empty.

5.3 Crosscountry (Aberdeen/Edinburgh/Glasgow to Birmingham, Bristol and the SW)

Useful to know that on *Crosscountry* train services, there are 3 bike spaces but only 2 are reservable.

5.4 Caledonian Sleeper

The *Caledonian Sleeper* has recently discontinued its original service where, at times of high demand, your bike could be transported by road courier if the on-train bike services were full.

6. Some General Information:

6.1 Easiest way to make on-line bike reservations

Disappointingly, not all train ticket booking websites (including LNER and Virgin Trains) have the facility to make online bike reservations when buying tickets.

Fortunately the *ScotRail* website (www.scotrail.co.uk/) now has this facility and can be used for journeys by any operator, both in Scotland and elsewhere. Subject to bike spaces being available - and one can't tell in advance if bike spaces are available until part way through the ticket buying process. When you get to the seat reservation page, look for the "Cycles" box.

6.2 Update on procedures where bikes abandoned at Waverley Station

It is frustrating if you can't get your bike locked up somewhere, yet there appear to be abandoned bikes cluttering up the racks. Here is Waverley Station's procedure for identifying and dealing with abandoned bikes:

The nightshift security team check the cycle racks each evening for bikes and bits of bikes that have been left in the racks. When there is no evidence of movement on these within a 7 day period they post written advice on them asking the owner to contact our Reception team.

If there is no response to this or the second advice posted just after two weeks later, they advise the BTP who supervise the removal of the bike to a store room and check the bike details against a live stolen list and for security markings on the bike itself to reunite the bike with its owner.

Unclaimed cycles/bits of cycles are then stored for six months. If still unclaimed after this point they offer the cycles/recycle bits of cycles unclaimed wherever possible and usually with a local registered cycle/recycling centre, The Bike Station, which has Scottish registered charity status. We have also donated cycles to local primary schools, most recently Holyrood Primary, RAF cadets, and Robin and Rachel House, operated by the Children's Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS).

7. Comments, Compliments and Complains

Scotrail services are operated by *Abellio* under contract to the *Scottish Government*. As such, whilst *Abellio* is responsible for delivering the day-to-day operation of *Scotrail* train services, these are as specified by *Transport Scotland* (TS), which is the national transport agency of Scotland, an Executive Agency of the *Scottish Government* and accountable to Scottish Ministers via the Cabinet Secretary for Transport (currently Michael Matheson).

Please forward on any useful replies to: bikerail@spokes.org.uk

Scottish Rail Policy: This is the responsibility of *Transport Scotland* and the most effective approach is to ask your MSP to raise the matter with the Minister, as the person in overall charge of *Transport Scotland*. See the box above. Find your MSP at www.writetothem.com
Or you can email to: scottish.ministers@gov.scot and on rail matters you will get a reply from an official at *Transport Scotland*.

ScotRail:

For day to day issues you can use the online form at <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/form/customer-relations>
email: customer.relations@scotrail.co.uk

LNER:

email: customers@lner.co.uk

Write to: London North Eastern Railway, FREEPOST RTUH-TUGH-GCLZ, Cramlington
NE23 1WG

Transpennine:

email: tpecustomer.relations@firstgroup.com

Write to: Customer Relations, TransPennine Express, Freepost, ADMAIL 3878, Manchester, M1
9YB

Crosscountry:

Email: customer.relations@crosscountrytrains.co.uk

Write to: CrosscountryCustomer Relations, Freepost: RRXU-HUEC-GLLY, 5th Floor Cannon
House, 18 The Priory Queensway, Birmingham, B4 6BS

Caledonian Sleeper:

Use the online form at <https://www.sleeper.scot/contact>

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