

I have been in correspondence with Scotrail about their plans to introduce new 380 trains on the North Berwick line in April 2011 with similar trains on the routes from Glasgow Central to Ayr, Ardrossan, Largs, Wemyss Bay and Gourrock in September 2010. While it looks as if this will provide an increase in cycle carriage facilities (up to 10 per train if bikes are stored in vestibules with two designated spaces in tip up seats), it is likely that at peak times when there are a lot of passengers standing, guards will quite reasonably, not allow them in the vestibules. (See my points below and website info -<http://www.scotrail.co.uk/newtrains>).

I have copied below my original email to Scotrail and their response, which is not very helpful. I have been in touch with Spokes who will be attending a ScotRail/cycling liaison meeting on 28 April. I thought it would be useful for CTC Lothians to know about this, and if you wish, to make some representation to Scotrail. It may be too late to encourage them to change the design of the trains, but we can but try! I see from the CTC website that there is a CTC policy on cycle carriage and trains (<http://www.ctc.org.uk/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=4711>) and it would be interesting to know if there is experience from CTC elsewhere in the UK, on addressing this issue.

I have copied my original email to Iain Reid, the MSP for East Lothian, but with no response to date. I will copy this email to Richard Grant, who is the Spokes rep on this issue. It might be helpful to encourage any CTC members who use the train, to send in comment. The disclaimer at the end of their reply indicates that their message should be seen as confidential, so should not be copied. However, I would be happy for my message to be sent on or I could do a brief summary of the main points to circulate to members.

Sorry about the wordy correspondence, but the issues require some detail.

Any thoughts gratefully received!
Best wishes,
Nicola

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Subject: Proposed introduction of 380 trains on North Berwick line

Dear Scotrail Customer relations team,

re Proposed introduction of 380 trains on North Berwick Line - cycle carriage

I would be grateful if you could pass on this email to the relevant person responsible for commissioning the introduction of the 380 trains.

I write on behalf of the cyclist users of the North Berwick Line and also as a member of Spokes and a volunteer ranger for Sustrans, to express concern about the plans for cycle carriage on the new 380 trains,

1. Existing award- winning good service

The current 322 trains on this line introduced in 2006, have 8 dedicated cycle spaces which have been exceptionally well used. These spaces are virtually always full at peak times, and well used at other times of the day and at weekends. This is due to several factors: because many cyclists find the easy combination of cycle carriage by train and travel by cycle through Edinburgh and East Lothian for work and leisure an excellent service, and the popularity of North Berwick as a place for a day out by bike, the new site of Queen Margaret University at Musselburgh. Since the introduction of these trains, the numbers of people transporting cycles has significantly increased as has the number of people using cycles to travel to the station and use the train. In 2006, First Scotrail received the winning award for Customer Service Excellence from the Association of Train Operating companies, for the extra capacity of passengers and cycles on this line. (See appendix for detail of this award). It was clear that First Scotrail had listened to consumers and what they wanted, when planning the refurbishment of these trains. I took part in this consultation process.

2. Likely reduction of potential cycle carriage at peak times when demand is highest on new 380 trains

I understand from your website, that there is to be a widespread introduction of the 380 trains in Scotland and that they will replace the existing 322 trains on the North Berwick line in March 2011. I appreciate that these new trains will have many very positive features for all passengers, including more comfortable seating, luggage space, better wheelchair access and toilet space. Your website indicates that the new trains will have 2 designated spaces for cycles which will be joint use with 9 tip-up seats (apparent from your promotional video). Your website states that there are potentially 8 further cycle spaces - "*On North Berwick-Edinburgh services, four carriage trains means a total of eight vestibules.... at the discretion of on-train staff, cycles can also be stored in the vestibule areas*". At first sight this appears that total cycle carriage could be increased to 10, which would be excellent. However, the times at which there is likely to be highest demand is during rush hours, when there will also be most passengers standing in the vestibule areas. Your answers to questions in the 'Train Features' section of your website, indicates that it is likely that the total cycle carriage will be reduced during rush hours.

" What if the train is really busy?

Train staff may not be able to accept additional cycles if the train becomes busy and the vestibules are full. However, customers with cycles already on board will be allowed to remain."

It is understandable that restrictions would have to be made in these circumstances in relation to health and safety. However, this is likely to mean that at the time when there is highest demand to carry cycles on this service, the current design of the new trains will result in reduction of the current number of cycles carried in dedicated cycle areas, and have the potential for understandable resentment by other passengers who may be asked to leave the tip up seats or be squeezed in the vestibules. The guards may also find that when they are most busy, they have the additional task of turning away cyclists. The overall result of the introduction of the current design of 380 trains on the North Berwick line, is that there will be less cycles carried at peak times when there is most demand with more potential conflict between guards, passengers and cyclists. This compares unfavourably with the existing trains where the dedicated cycle space gets round these problems.

3. Reduction in number of seats with new 380 trains

Your website indicates that the existing 322 trains have 293 seats and that the new 380 trains will have 282 seats. If the 2 designated bike spaces were in use by tipping up the 9 seats in this area, this would be reduced to 273 seats. Undoubtedly the new 380 trains will be more comfortable with more room per seat and better disabled facilities, but the overall number of seats will be reduced.

4. Misleading information on maintaining secured cycle provision

The floor area for cycle provision on the existing 322 trains on the North Berwick line takes up the equivalent of 19 seats of the current seating layout. If this floor area was to be used in the new 380 trains which will have seats in banks of 2 rather than 3 seats, it would take up the equivalent of up to 16 seats. Your website gives a misleading statement indicating that keeping this secured cycle provision would reduce seats by more than 100. The issue is what is available per train to all passengers, rather than across all trains on the line.

"On North Berwick-Edinburgh services, four carriage trains means a total of eight vestibules. We've tried to strike the right balance. To provide the same level of secured cycle provision as currently exists with the Class 322s would reduce the number of seats available for passengers by more than 100. We do not believe this is fair, or best use of public sector funding. "

In summary, my concerns and suggestions are-

a) The secured cycle provision on the existing 322 trains have resulted in increased cycle use and resulted in Scotrail winning the award for Customer Service Excellence from the

Association of Train Operating companies. It would be a significant loss to East Lothian, cyclists in Scotland and to First Scotrail if this provision is diluted with the current proposals.

b) While the current design of the new 380 trains on the North Berwick line will be more comfortable and better for disabled passengers, they will result in reduced carriage space for cycles at peak times and set up potential conflict between passengers, cyclists and guards.

c) Scotland's current Transport Policy includes a commitment to "to quadruple cycle use from 1996 levels by 2012" and "increase the proportion of short journeys made on foot and on bikes to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, reduce congestion and contribute to a healthier Scotland thus contributing to the sustainability golden rule to enhance the environment and reduce emissions". If First Scotrail were to maintain the existing secured cycle provision on the new trains, this would help to meet these commitments.

d) I urge First Scotrail to consider examining ways to include the same level of secured cycle provision on the new 380 trains by considering the use of different designs, such as adapting the existing provision on 322 trains, or those used on trains in Europe or elsewhere in UK.

e) The integration of transport systems is an essential way of the commitments of Scotland's transport policy. I urge First Scotrail to work in partnership with Transport Scotland, Scottish Ministers and City councils at City rail termini to look at ways in which cycling and active travel can be encouraged, such as that suggested by Lord Adonis for England -14million pounds to create 'cycling hubs' in 10 major stations. The example of the Paris system of 'velib' where cycles can be rented from places no more than 300 metres from each other, is also one which could be considered. (<http://www.velib.paris.fr/Comment-ca-marche>.)

I look forward to hearing your comments

Yours sincerely,
Nicola McNeill

cc. Iain Gray, MSP, East Lothian
Katharine Taylor, Sustrans Scotland
Dave du Feu, Spokes, Edinburgh

Appendix-

Customer Service Excellence from the Association of Train Operating companies Winner

First ScotRail

First ScotRail identified a need for increased capacity for cyclists on the busy North Berwick to Edinburgh and Glasgow route.

The company created space for the storage of eight cycles per train – up from none – and an extra 41 standard class seats per train by converting first class carriages and making better use of excessive luggage space. They did this with engineers Hunslet-Barclay and in consultation with train leasing company HSBC. The results have seen a significant take up of the cycle spaces.

The judges said this was a very impressive project that has delivered tangible results. It showed First ScotRail's sheer determination to do the very best for all its customers, while consulting widely, and clearly demonstrates what can be done if the will is there.

Extracts from Scot rail response to my email-

The use of available space on our trains is necessarily a compromise between the needs of different passenger groups, i.e. cyclists, non-cyclists, passengers with and without luggage, customers in wheelchairs or parents with prams/buggies. One of our priorities has been to maximise the seating capacity whilst still making adequate provision for those other passenger groups and also fulfilling our obligations to disabled customers.

At the crux of this is the fact that each two-cycle space reduces seating capacity by 6 seats when either or both spaces are in use. Each non-paying cycle therefore displaces at least three fare paying passengers from seats.

As you are aware, cycles can also be stored in the vestibule areas. On the North Berwick services, four carriage trains will mean a total of eight vestibules, but to provide the same level of secured cycle provision as currently exists on the Class 322s would reduce the number of seats available for passengers by more than 100. We do not believe this is fair, or best use of public sector funding.