



The Levenmouth Rail Campaign Newsletter

"Much More Than a Transport Project!"

**Campaign
Update 56
August 2019
(5th. Series)**

“Hoppin’ Happy”!

GO-AHEAD! - Joyous Campaigners Caught Unawares as Minister Announces Levenmouth Rail Link’s Revival

THE PRESENTATION and Speeches were all Ready; a Packed House was Assembling, but then, Things *Failed* to Go as Expected. ... Yet, even after that, We were *All So Overjoyed*!!

The Levenmouth Rail Link Revival is “GO”!

So announced Scottish Transport Secretary **Michael Matheson** at a specially-convened gathering at the *Fife Renewables Innovation Centre* at Methil Docks, Leven, on Thursday afternoon, 8th. August. - An Historic Day.

Mr. Matheson’s statement caught everyone **“On The Hop”** - but we couldn’t be **Happier!** Our friends at *Peter Brett Associates* had spent so much time and effort in putting together all their slides, graphs, stats., and more - but they were also clearly overjoyed at their achievements, too.

We may have to treat this announcement with a little bit of trepidation, and now have “up to five years” to wait for our trains to return. *Roll-on 2024*, but in the meantime, we will keep the *LevenMouth Rail Campaign* going, just in case something untoward happens, and *LMRC News* ought to continue - even if it becomes less-frequent.

Story (Partial): **Jamie Callaghan, East Fife Mail, Wed., 14th. August.:**

The Transport Secretary was given a great, and loud, ovation after he made his announcement in a room where the *LMRC* had gathered several times in the earlier stages of their bid to have the train services reinstated. He had been expected, perhaps, to help in the presentation, giving whatever progress updates he had - but, instead, came up with the goods: “I can announce that the line *will* re-open!” ▶

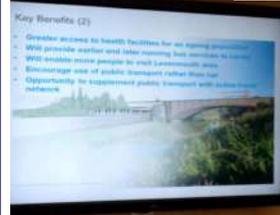


Right: - The Transport Minister, Michael Matheson, gives his speech ... during which he makes his historic announcement that the *Levenmouth Rail Link* will re-open within five years. **Below: Clock-wise from Upper-Right:** Next to talk are Jenny Gilruth, MSP for Mid-Fife and Glenrothes; and Paul McCartney of *Peter Brett Associates*; a *P.B.A.* image depicts one proposed site of the new Leven Station, in this case behind the *Sainsbury’s* supermarket and alongside Bawbee Bridge, but it may be nearer the bus station; the gathering also brought a large media presence.



Walk the Line - 3 Coaltown of Balgonie to Leven

**“Walking Back to Happiness”!
Photos Inside! ...**



L.M.R.C. News

CREDIBLE Journey: On to Destination ...

Celebratory Scenes after Minister's Announcement

WE WILL Tell More of the Story of the meeting at which the "Go-Ahead" was given for re-instating the Levenmouth Rail Link next time in *LMRC News*... but, for now, we bring you this montage of photographs from a joyous day.



▼ *LMRC News'* equivalent of the *East Fife Mail* front-page photograph, with *LMRC*, and Supporters - truly jubilant.

Thursday, 8th. August, 2019.



▼ *LMRC's* Allen Armstrong and Eugene Clarke with Bill Reeve, the Director of Rail at *Transport Scotland*, discussing the rail revival.



▼ Transport Secretary Michael Matheson is next in-line for his TV News interview.



▼ Councillor Altany Craik; *LMRC's* Eugene Clarke; Cllr. Ryan Smart.

Transport Planning Objectives:

- Improve transport access to employment and key services, including education, health and leisure facilities, in the Levenmouth area.
- Improve transport access and connectivity to and from the Levenmouth area for businesses, visitors and the resident population.
- Increase the sustainable mode share for the residents and workforce in the Levenmouth area.

▼ Paul McCartney - of *Peter Brett Associates* - with the presentation that was practically left all but redundant after Michael Matheson's unexpected, and very welcome, statement.

▲ Transport Secretary Michael Matheson, and Jenny Gilruth, M.S.P. – who requested the *Holyrood* debate on the Levenmouth Rail Link on 27 September 2017.



▲ Two Media Interviews at the Same Time... !

David Ross, leader of *Fife Council*.

▼ Media Team Move On.



'Walk-The-Line' - 3 ... Saturday, 13th. July.

[on Exactly the Same Date as 'Live Aid' in 1985...]

("But *We Don't Expect The World, Just a Rail-Link!*")

"Walking Back to Happiness"!

ON SATURDAY, 13th. July, some members of LMRC, and up to twenty members of the general public, defied the visible threat of heavy rain on the third "Walk-The-Line" event - though the first to trace the route of the whole of the Rail Link, from near its connection with the main line at Thornton Junction, to Leven.

They couldn't have known that the *Go-Ahead* for reinstatement of these 5½ miles, or 8¾ kms., of railway would be given a few short weeks on - their concern was just to stay dry and attract peoples' attention for the Campaign as they set out from Coaltown of Balgonie, near Glenrothes.

They needn't have worried on either count, though; announcement of re-instatement is given, and they stayed dry - *just about*. They'd avoided a repeat of the dire weather on exactly this date in 1985, the day of *Live Aid* ... not that our great news is as important as that was, but it's certainly, very, important to us in Levenmouth!

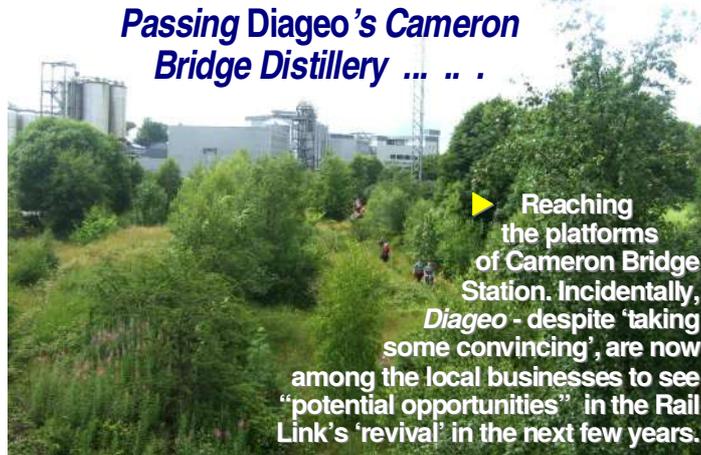
The walk lasted two hours or more, and some of the images are here, including the get-together at the end, under that familiar railway arch of Bawbee Bridge.

Considering what's come since (*and in the song title*; see Back Page), this literally *has* been a case of 'Walking Back to Happiness'!

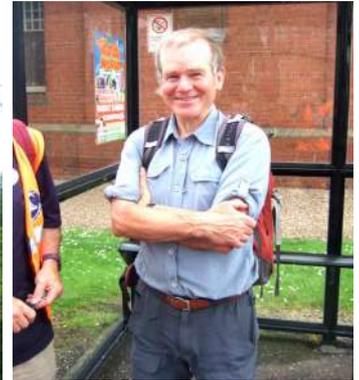


▲ Storm-clouds over Glenrothes as seen from Coaltown of Balgonie as the *Walk-The-Line* began.

Passing Diageo's Cameron Bridge Distillery



► Reaching the platforms of Cameron Bridge Station. Incidentally, *Diageo* - despite 'taking some convincing', are now among the local businesses to see "potential opportunities" in the Rail Link's 'revival' in the next few years.



Above: Derek Sime, railway engineer and advisor, who guided the latest walk. Derek was also involved in the production of the Campaign booklet two years ago.



▼ Stepping out from Coaltown of Balgonie.

The Rail Link is in operational order at the Thornton (or Earlsseat) end, after recent use by freight trains. (▼ 24th. May, '16.)



'It can't be *too* long now ... but I'm **STILL** not waiting around *here* for a train for another five years!!'

▼ The platform edge is still visible here in this scene at Cameron Bridge Station on Saturday, 13th. July. The tracks *are* also all still here - but hidden under the grass.



Left and Lower-Left: Two photos failed to transfer from a *smartphone* to our main computer due to some "network" error or other, and we had to 'think clever' and photograph the 'phone with a conventional digital camera.



▼ The tracks are still here - but over-run with trees - in this view along the rail track-bed 'path' from Cameron Bridge to Methil, and the former *Kirkland Works*. This may be part of a new footpath / cyclepath network.

Unfortunately, it *still* did not work - but at least it saved us the trouble of 'blinking' folks' faces in these views of the group at the finish, and also on the approach to Leven.

Congratulations from Other Campaigns and Rail Industry Experts.

NEWS OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT that the Levenmouth Rail Link is to be Re-opened did not take very long to spread across Social Media, with kind messages of congratulation coming in from many people, including several notable rail industry professionals, as well as people from other rail campaign groups around Scotland.

Here are just a few of those reactions. One of the first, or *the* first, to be received by LMRC, at 9.08 p.m., on Thursday, 8th. August, was from **Ian Budd**, of the **Friends of the Far North Line** group.

No doubt after catching the evening news on TV, like so many others, Mr. Budd wrote: *"Hi, there! - Just wanted to send our congratulations on your fantastic news today. We've been at so many meetings where an LMRC person has chimed in, and we've been thinking; 'Not them again!' ... Surely the sign of great campaigning! With Best Wishes, Ian Budd, Convenor, Friends of the Far North Line, (FoFNL, www.fofnl.org.uk)."*

Allen Armstrong, LMRC Secretary, replied: "Hi, Ian - Many Thanks for this! You and your colleagues will know the amount of effort and determination needed to maintain the uphill struggle so it's an absolute delight to receive that announcement yesterday, which was more than expected. We assumed further studies would be the 'prescription'. However, as your own Campaign illustrates, having a service is not the end of the story – though it *does* fulfil the ancient, cookery-related instruction: *'First, Catch Your Hare...!'*"

"To be fair to FoFNL, we've heard you folks chipping in at most of the events we've attended..., so..., more power to your collective elbows!! - All the best, Allen A.."

Another message came in from **Tom Thorburn**, the Chairman of **Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES)**: *"Dear Allen..., Congratulations! You and the Levenmouth Committee must be on Cloud Nine at the wonderful news today that the Levenmouth Line is to be re-opened. You must be very proud of yourselves at this news, with your efforts, especially given the Minister's words that the line may be back in service in the early part of Network Rail's 'C.P. 6.' [Control Period, 2019-'24]."*

"This all goes to show that the hard, unpaid work of campaigning does work, and you can be very proud that you can (and will) make a massive difference to a disadvantaged area. ... On behalf of the RAGES Committee, please pass on our congratulations to the Levenmouth Committee. - Kind Regards, Tom Thorburn."

"Hi, Tom!", Allen A. replied; "Many thanks for this! You and your colleagues will know the amount of effort and determination needed to maintain the uphill struggle, so it's an absolute delight to receive that announcement yesterday, which was more than expected. We assumed that further studies would be the 'prescription'.

"However, as your own impressive Campaign illustrates - and we gained some interesting lessons from that talk you and Barrie gave a while back, (the last five years are *blurring-blur*) - we cannot afford to relax or step back. We hope your own, frustrating journey to get the two new stations [Reston and East Linton, between

and Berwick-on-Tweed] opened becomes a reality..., and that it shouldn't be too long before we can visit, *by train*, from Leven!"

Campaign will be "Admired as a Classic of Its Kind"

John Yellowlees, the Honorary Rail Ambassador at **Abellio ScotRail**, current railway passenger franchisees in Scotland, put his point across very effectively by simply e-Mailing the LMRC: - *"Heartiest congratulations Allen!! - I believe that your Campaign will be admired as 'a Classic of Its Kind'. - Kind Regards, John Yellowlees."*

John is a former ScotRail 'Community Team' member, states his **LinkedIn Webpage**, known as a Trustee of the **Kilmarnock Railway Station Heritage Trust** and Honorary President of the **South-West of Scotland Community Rail Partnership**. He was also involved in filming of documentaries with Michael Portillo - the former Minister known for the great deal of assistance he gave in saving the renowned and truly-beautiful **Settle-to-Carlisle Railway**, in North Yorkshire and Cumbria, from closure in 1989.

To John, Allen replied: "Many Thanks for this, and for your terrific support these past five years. It has taken years of dedicated effort by a core group, and it was a strong case to begin with, but we're relieved to get this over the line.

"We'll need to keep it going, to ensure it moves in the right direction - and will be looking to take part in the **Levenmouth Blueprint** which the Minister mentioned to maximise the benefits. ... Incidentally, we're still keeping the Fife rail-depot idea alive. Ken [Haig] and I were speaking to a rep. of the company, **Metsa**, who own the site of the old creosote works next to the line.

"I also mentioned this, in passing, to Bill Reeve of **Transport Scotland** yesterday - but Thornton *may* still 'have the edge'."

John Yellowlees replied: "Hope you'll be marking the 50th. anniversary in an upbeat style! Thornton would 'have the edge' as it is on a through-route - and should never have closed - but there is the cost of taxis for train-crew between there and Glenrothes with Thornton. Well Done again! David Shirres [another accomplished rail engineer involved in building the **Borders Railway** (part of the ex-**Waverley Line**), and produced our superb and influential booklet summarising the case in conjunction with LMRC] stands ready to help ensure there's no loss of momentum."

Thornton Transport Troubles - Fifty Years Ago ... !

The concerns over taxis at Thornton, ironically, revive concerns heard at the public inquiry into the Rail Link's future, which was held in Leven in January 1969. Mr. William Munro, representing the Methil branch of the **National Union of Railwaymen**, spoke for around 20 members of the branch who used the line, stating closure would mean an extra financial outlay of over 20 shillings a week [over £1, or about £16.25 now; **Bank of England 'Historic Inflation Calculator' Website**], on the Leven-to-Kirkcaldy bus via Gallatown [near Dysart], and changing there for a bus to Thornton. Their working days would also increase as they'd have to use the bus. Back then, the Leven-to-Thornton train took 12 minutes, but to travel by bus would increase the working day by "two hours per day", and those with bicycles would not be able to take these with them on the bus. Most used their 'cycles at one time or another when they were working late-shifts.

"Our members feel that the bus services are *not* a suitable alternative to travel by train", Mr. Munro said;

"The *N.U.R.* made various attempts to raise these matters with the Minister of Transport, but have been ignored".

"Fitting Success for Sheer Bloody-Minded Conviction"

Another message - from Tuebingen, near Stuttgart, in Germany - was sent by **Christopher Harvie**, formerly a regional **Member** of the **Scottish Parliament** for **Fife** and **Central Scotland**, but now Professor of British Studies in Tuebingen when he's not at home in Melrose: "Dear Levenmouth Campaigners. Heartiest congratulations on a fitting success for sheer bloody-minded conviction of the righteousness of your cause..., and ingenuity in forcing it through. I am old enough to remember a 1953 summer holiday spent in Buckhaven, which I loved for the excitement of the great coaling-harbour of Methil, which led to later involvement in railway preservation and conservation, as well as the history of the trade union movement and its astonishing leaders - recorded by my friends Iain MacDougall and Tom Hubbard.

"I have recently managed to complete a working Hornby 'O'-gauge L.N.E.R. clockwork goods train set of 1948 [which at that point will have been 'running a year late'..., but now they're back! - Ed.]. It's in good condition and should, I hope, raise £100-plus for your funds. - Christopher Harvie."

Allen responded: "Many Thanks for these remarks - and for you terrific and well-informed support over the years ... and that's a very kind offer to help Campaign finances ... superb!!

"I really liked the 'bloody-minded conviction'!

"Interesting to hear of your interest in rail may have been kindled by holidays in this area - the resort aspect has dwindled, and, in Buckhaven, the beach is long disappeared. Methil Docks now handle very limited traffic.

"It was, indeed, an absolute delight to receive that announcement yesterday. We assumed further studies would [just mean] further delay. To be fair to the Minister, he came out at the start and announced it to a packed hall, so the few slides by *Peter Brett Associates*, which followed, *seemed* almost something of an after-thought!"

Holidaymaker's Hobbies Prove "Fruitful"! - First-Right:

The *LMRC* Chairman Eugene Clarke is surrounded at Methil Docks by reporters all eager to hear his glad reaction to Michael Matheson's announcement that the Rail Link is set for re-opening. The Docks are right behind them, with the exit channel visible. **Sec-**

ond-Right: One of those who responded by e-Mail to the news said he was on holiday in Buckhaven in 1953. The Docks and several local railways had inspired his future hobbies and career ... We've been looking for news archives from a certain subject *and year* and have name-checked an old friend he mentions - *He* is in both stories!!



THE FIFESHIRE ADVERTISER, MAY 30, 1953.

M.P.s To Discuss Methil Docks Future Help For Industry Conference

Tom Hubbard, M.P., At Burntisland Survey Of Current Topics

Image: Fifehire Advertiser - Saturday, 30th. May, 1953.
@: "Successor Rights-Holder Unknown"; taken from British Newspaper Archive Website; -the British Library Board.

Allen Armstrong then turned to *LMRC News* - writing "I hope you've recovered from the shock news yesterday, Alistair! I assume you're planning an August news- letter now ... and there's no need to hunt too far for *THE* story."

Well, it looks as though we've found it!

MANY THANKS, FROM LMRC NEWS, TO FELLOW CAMPAIGNERS, FOLLOWERS OF THE LEVENMOUTH RAIL CAMPAIGN, AND EVERYONE, INCLUDING ALL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, COUNCILLORS, RAIL INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS, RAILFUTURE SCOTLAND, RAGES, EVERYONE ELSE WHO HAS KINDLY HELPED AND GUIDED US TO THIS BRILLIANT SUCCESS !

From Alistair Aynsough, Editor, *LMRC News*, Tuesday, 20th. August, 2019.

Allen & MSP David: 'Peace is Declared'



SEVERAL of the local MSP's have supported the Leven-Mouth Rail Campaign from the start -

...Like a Scene Straight Out of *Holyrood*'

DAVID Torrance, Kirkcaldy's M.S.P., seen to the **Right** in this scene at the Methil Gala on Saturday, 24th. June, has been just one of many high-profile locals kind enough to support the LevenMouth Rail Campaign pretty much from the start, but even this could not prevent a scene "straight out of *Holyrood*", rather than Hollywood, as he became embroiled in a lively debate with *LMRC* Secretary Allen Armstrong. Left, about the lack of a Rail Link. After this exchange, Allen was seen doing the rounds at the Gala, blowing his whistle, and shouting: "The Next Train from Leven is not expected for another five years!"



or soon after. One of them is David Torrance, *Member for Kirkcaldy*, and he was seen with the *LMRC*'s Allen Armstrong, recalling the 'ups and downs' of the campaign soon after Michael Matheson made his surprise statement; there were a few memorable 'spats'!...

Top: Other Campaigners flank David Torrance and Allen Armstrong as they recall the highs and lows of these past five years or more - for the *LMRC* and politicians backing the Campaign. They did not *always* agree - as seen **Above** at *Methil Gala '17*.

REINSTATE THE LEVEN-EDINBURGH RAIL-LINK NOW!

LMRC Meetings

Our MAIN PUBLIC ["Action Group"] MEETINGS are Held Monthly - Except in Summer and December - at the ...

**Levenmouth Academy
Community Use School**
Methilhaven Road, Buckhaven, Leven, KY8 1EA.
6.30 p.m., TUESDAY, 27th.

Enter the Academy grounds by the Main Gate; go straight on for about 200 metres, or 220 yards; the Community Use School entrance is on the Left. ...

August.



'Walking Back to Happiness' *



... to the 'Community Use' School !

* 'Song-Title Arrows' ... Helen Shapiro [1961].

PLEASE BE AWARE ...

Our next meeting is on
TUESDAY, 27th. August, at 6.30 to 8.00 p.m.,
(or, 18.30h. to 20.00h.),
at the

LEVENMOUTH ACADEMY 'COMMUNITY USE'

Please Note The Change of Day and Venue!

Future meetings will be same time and place on the last Tuesday of each month, except December and July.

EVERYONE WELCOME !

THE MAIN ITEM ON THE AGENDA THIS MONTH WILL BE THE UPDATE ON THE CAMPAIGN FOLLOWING THE MEETING WITH THE CABINET SECRETARY, MICHAEL MATHESON. ...

... .. For More Information on this, or any other queries, *please read on* ...

LMRC Contacts

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Facebook - www.facebook.com/levenmouth.railcampaign

Produced by ALISTAIR AYNSCOUGH, Colinsburgh, Fife, for the *LevenMouth Rail Campaign*.

Facebook Messages ...

Ålgårdbanens Venner, Rogaland, Norway, Monday, 12th. August:

"Så skal nok en bane gjenåpnes i Skottland! Den skotske regjeringen vedtok på torsdag å gjenåpne den åtte kilometer lange Levenmouth-banen. Banen, som kan sammenlignes med Ålgårdbanen på flere vis, har vært uten persontrafikk siden 1969. Vi gratulerer [Levenmouth Rail Campaign](#) for suksessfull innsats!"

"Then another track will be re-opened in Scotland! The Scottish government adopted on Thursday to re-open the eight km.-long Levenmouth track. The track, which compares [with] Ålgårdbanen in several [ways], has been without passenger traffic 'since 1969'. We congratulate [Levenmouth Rail Campaign](#) for their successful efforts."

Lesley Roberts (London): "Lovely! I campaigned for this about 12 years ago!! Good things come to those who wait..."

Beachcomber Family Amusements, Leven Promenade, Friday, 9th. August:

"Well done [Levenmouth Rail Campaign](#)! Your hard work and dedication in bringing back the rail link will make a massive difference to Levenmouth and the rest of Fife." - [#loveleven](#) [#LevenMouth](#) [#LevenProm](#) [#raillink](#) [#train](#)

Ralph Green (Home Not Stated): "What a waste of money. Another [party] political manoeuvre for votes." [*You Can't Please Everybody!* Identity of Party Concealed; LMRC are 'non-political'.]

Surely More to Come Next Time !

"Now We've Got a Little Bit of Extra Time... ?"



ALLEN Armstrong, seen being interviewed, **Left**, Ken Haig and some other **LMRC** members, are also involved with the environmental charity **CLEAR Buckhaven** so, after line-clearance work for the walks, the challenge of blending nature and the Rail Link together - from flowers and trees to the planned, ecology-minded cycle network, and more - may well now fall at **their** feet!

CAMPAIGN CALL "LOBBY YOUR MSP!" SAY LMRC

ALTHOUGH, of Course, we have the wonderful news that the Levenmouth Rail Link is to be reinstated, the **LMRC** will still be active, and will continue to keep watch on progress. If anyone has concerns at some stage, they should still write to their MSP, MP or Local Councillor. ...

From The Creator of '**Brougham Hall News**'.

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