



GREAT NORTH OF SCOTLAND RAILWAY

ABERDEENSHIRE BACK ON TRACK

SUMMARY CASE

MARCH 2021



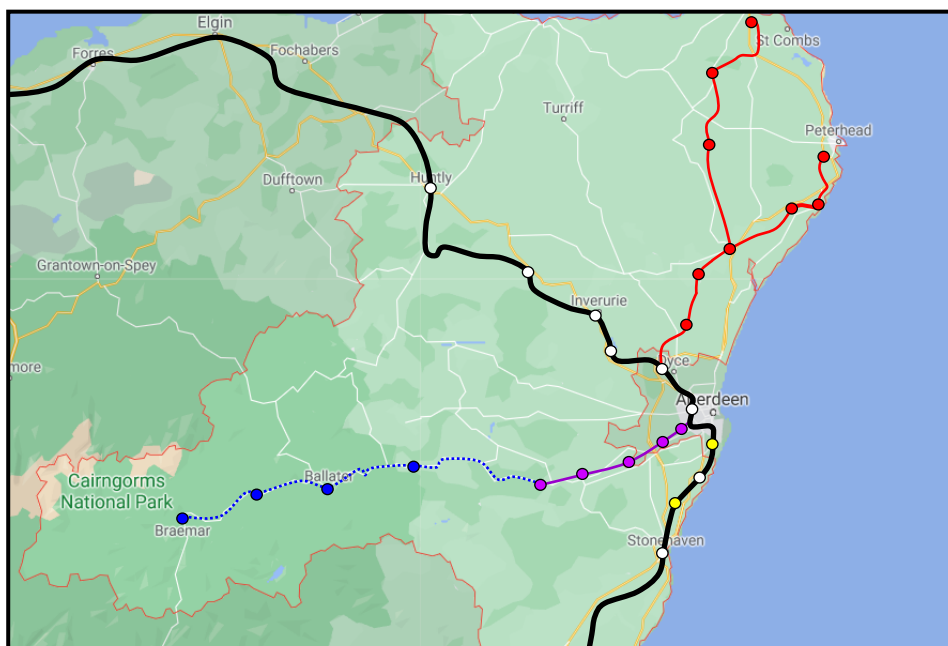
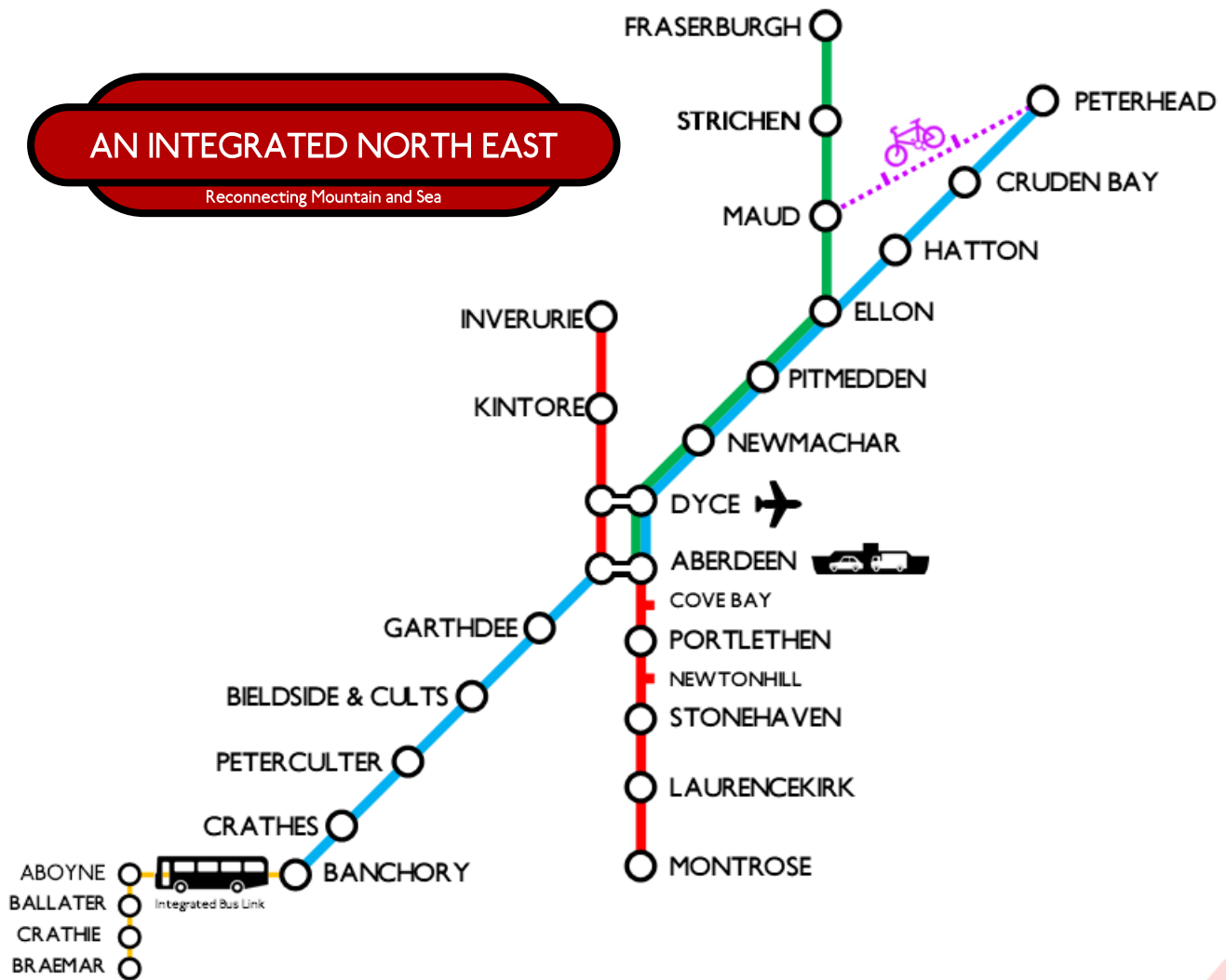
- 1.1 Aberdeen is the third largest city in Scotland, yet has the least rail connections of all seven. Vast swathes of the region lost vital rail links to the Beeching cuts. Only two lines survived, one to Dundee, and another to Inverness. Only stations that happen to be on the routes between these cities are lucky enough to have access to rail. Only 5 of the region's 15 largest settlements have a railway station.
- 1.2 The loss of local rail has contributed to a deep sense of isolation felt in all corners of Aberdeenshire today. North East communities feel forgotten about, and disconnected from even the rest of Aberdeenshire. The historic areas of Buchan, Deeside, Garioch and Kincardineshire within Aberdeenshire are divided culturally and poorly connected physically.
- 1.3 Public appetite for rail is extremely high, and we intend to demonstrate this. NESTRANS, the transport partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire, recently published their a regional transport strategy to 2040. In it, they conclude that a rail link to Fraserburgh and Peterhead is economically unjustifiable. No other possible railway schemes in the area were investigated.
- 1.4 Two commissioned studies in 2016 and '17 came to the conclusion that both connecting Fraserburgh and Peterhead to the rail network, and connecting only Ellon with a park and ride were "poor value for money". The picture has completely changed today thanks to works done between Aberdeen and Inverurie, changes in government policy on electrification, and new data from the Borders Railway. If these studies were done again today they would come to a different conclusion.
- 1.5 Achieving modal shift from private car to public transport is an essential goal of NESTRANS and the Scottish Government. This is our most powerful tool in the fight against the Climate Emergency. For Aberdeenshire, this is not achievable by road and bus improvements alone. Trains are by far the most environmentally friendly method of transport available today, and considering that "in terms of future development, the Aberdeen City and Shire region is expected to be the fastest growing in Scotland over the next 20 years"², leaving the people of Aberdeenshire without a rail option is not compatible with the challenges ahead.
- 1.6 This document presents a realistic and ambitious package for implementing transformative public transport for the benefit of the entirety of Aberdeenshire and its local communities. Building on the success of the Inverurie - Montrose Crossrail project by expanding its operation to the areas that desperately need better transport links. These plans will interconnect Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, stitching the social fabric of the region together while providing a one change connection to Edinburgh and London and beyond for almost 450,000 people.



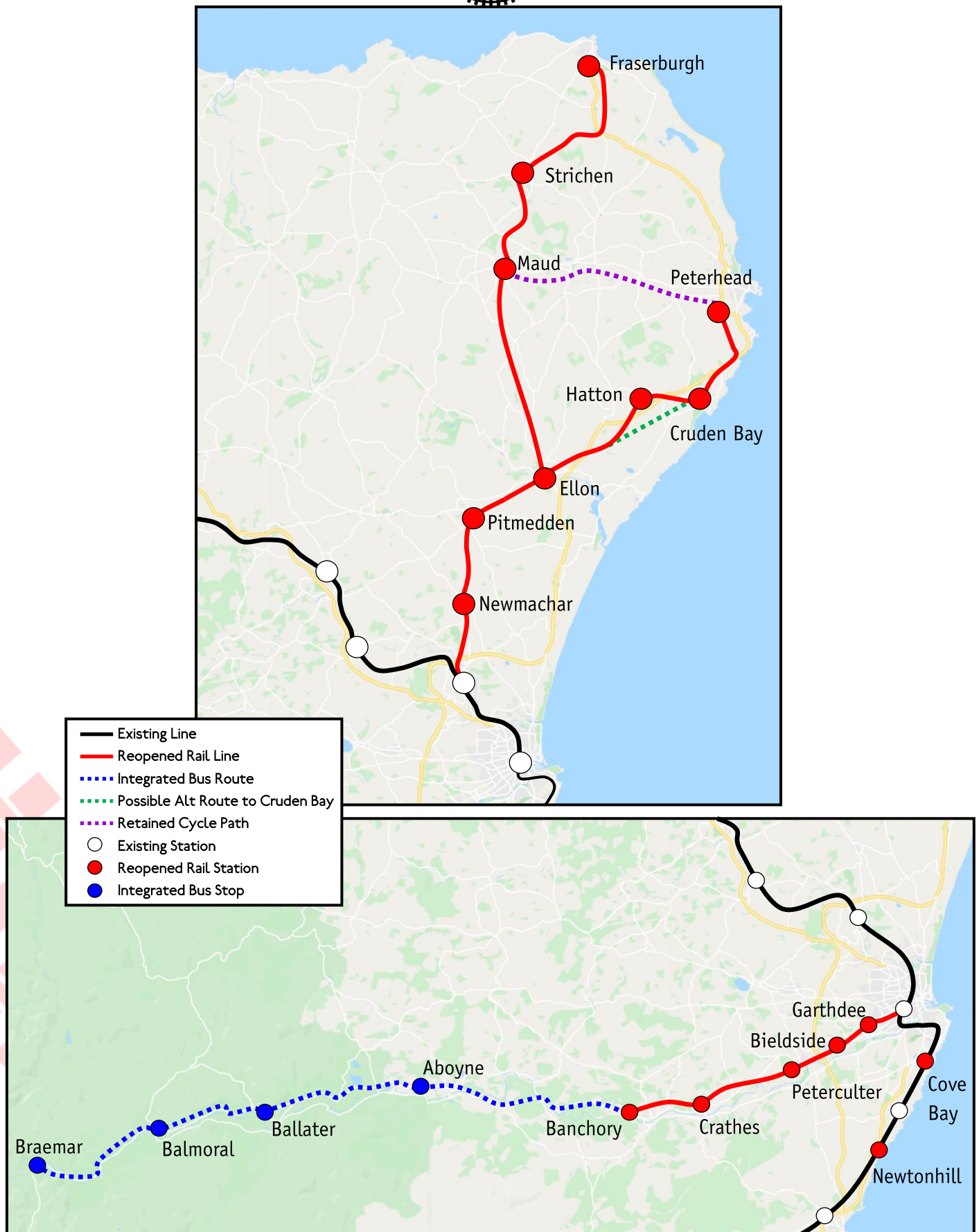


AN INTEGRATED NORTH EAST

Reconnecting Mountain and Sea



- New Alignment
- Reopened Deeside Railway
- Integrated Bus Route
- Existing Station
- Reopened Buchanan Station
- New Station
- Reopened Deeside Station
- Integrated Bus Stop





2.1 The Proposals

We envision a fully integrated public transport system that builds on the success of the existing Inverurie-Montrose cross rail project that brought a step change in rail transportation to the North East. These proposals connect 10 of Aberdeenshire's largest towns to fast, reliable public transport, providing an utterly transformative system that will result in massive modal shift for thousands of people in the region, and will set up opportunities for the necessary transformation of the North East economy.

First, a railway linking Fraserburgh and Peterhead with Aberdeen. The new line north mostly makes use of the disused Formartine and Buchan Way, but rather than branching at Maud, this line would branch at Ellon and follow the abandoned Boddam branch to Peterhead. A railway completed in this way would allow for competitive travel times with the car, while stopping at all of the largest settlements in the area. This particular solution has never been investigated in the past.

Next, a restoration of the Deeside Railway as far as Banchory, with an integrated bus link to Braemar that will meet every train. This would provide competitive public transport for commuters into Aberdeen as far as Banchory, and will create a bus link farther into Deeside that will establish regular and reliable public transport for isolated residents and support the region with the forthcoming surge in tourism it will see as Aberdeen begins to accept cruise ships.

Together with two new stations on the existing line at Cove Bay and Newtonhill, these new lines will bring meaningful interchanges to the existing network, expanding on the establishment of modern local rail services in Aberdeenshire, and will facilitate sustainable transport for the entirety of the North East of Scotland.

2.2 The Rationale

The closure of railways throughout Aberdeenshire as a result of the Beeching cuts unfairly removed efficient transport links from an entire region. Such a decision would never be taken today. Fraserburgh and Peterhead remain isolated and in decline. Poor links to the city limit their economic potential. These towns represent the largest population, the farthest from their closest railway station anywhere in the UK. Proposed road and bus improvements will not adequately address these problems. Previous studies on reconnecting Fraserburgh and Peterhead by rail are now obsolete, new data from the Borders Railway, changed government policy and our never-studied alignment completely changes the picture. Buchan also has a strong base for tourism with several tourist attractions popular with locals. Rail links will allow new tourism to blossom in the area, providing a viable sector for economic growth.

Deeside is already incredibly popular with tourists, the vast majority of these come from the UK, connecting Deeside to the rail network makes rail the natural choice for these travel destinations. Tourist numbers are set to swell with the opening of Aberdeen South Harbour, bringing Cruise Ships to Aberdeen. A rail link will help share the load as transport demands increase and offers a viable option for cruise passengers to travel sustainably. An efficient and easy to use train service will encourage cruise passengers to return in the future.

Aberdeenshire will be forced to go through massive economic change in the coming decades as the Oil and Gas industry contracts. This coupled with Aberdeen's close commuter towns provide us a perfect opportunity to provide revolutionary public transport in the region. Banchory, Ellon and Inverurie are sister towns, all three have equal potential for commuters, but only one currently has a rail link. Connecting the other two to the rail network will rebalance Aberdeenshire and allow significant growth around Aberdeen. Similarly, rail will allow smaller towns to meaningfully compete with Aberdeen for new Renewable Energy business as skilled workers are more likely to want to live in these areas.

Our proposals simultaneously set up Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire for the coming economic change, and deliver truly transformative modal shift away from the private car just at the time it is required.

3 Project Benefits

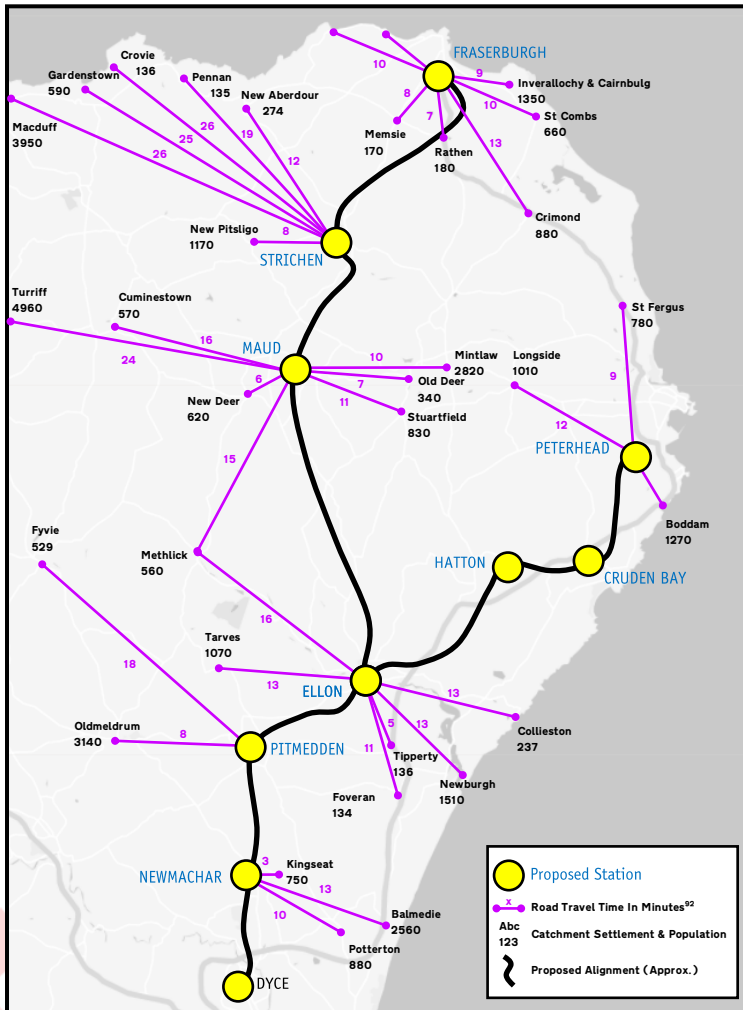


Proposed Benefit	Outcome
Improved Transport Mode Choice in Fraserburgh and Peterhead to Aberdeen Corridor.	Reduced economic impact of disruption on road network. Reduction in overall traffic, lowering concern over current Oil freight by road.
Better access to Scottish Government regeneration priority areas of Fraserburgh and Peterhead.	Prevent migration away from towns as area becomes a more attractive place to live for commuters to the city.
Increased reliability of journey times across region as transport load is shared across road and rail.	Further increase in the appeal of Buchan to commuters, supporting population growth in these towns. Increased reliability of journey times will encourage more modal shift to both rail and bus from car.
Increased reliability of freight movements by road through a reduction in overall traffic.	'Slack' will no longer have to be built into delivery times, making the region more attractive for business, supporting economic growth and allowing Buchan to compete with Aberdeen for new business.
Capitalise on growing Aberdeenshire rail commuter market, provide growth in home building in Ellon.	Raise Ellon to the same level as Inverurie, and see increased levels of home building as a result.
Direct link from Buchan to Dyce Heliports without entering Aberdeen for offshore workforce who must leave car behind.	Increased use of public transport due to improved convenience, less reliance on long distance Taxi usage on A90 and A952.
Direct link from Buchan to Dyce without entering Aberdeen for access to Aberdeen Airport and events at P&J Live.	Increased use of public transport due to improved convenience, reduced traffic after large P&J Live events, less car use at Airport.
Expanded travel to work catchment and zone of economic influence for Aberdeen.	Boosted employment and economic activity in Aberdeen and the surrounding area
Better inter-town links within Buchan.	Improved mobility for non car owners, greater social inclusion in communities. Modal shift from car to public transport for short journeys.
Direct rail link from rest of UK to North East Coast, star attractions and bucket list destinations.	Delivers a step change in the appeal of Buchan Coast as a tourist destination, allows area to grow a viable Tourism sector.
Direct rail link from Aberdeen to Ellon, providing an easy choice for Beer pilgrimages to Brewdog's 'Flagship' bar and the brewery in Ellon.	Supporting growth of a locally grown international brand, bringing international interest to Buchan, not just Aberdeen.
Much improved public transport access to HMP and YOI Grampian.	Transport made easier for visiting family members of young offenders. Likely increase in overall visits as a result, improving quality of life for these young offenders.
Much improved public transport access to NESCOL Fraserburgh Campus.	Students can travel between Aberdeen and Fraserburgh Campuses sustainably, better access for visiting family.
Bring all of Aberdeenshire north of Aberdeen from the east coast to the Aberdeen to Inverness line within 30 mins drive of a station.	No area of Aberdeenshire is left behind and tens of thousands of people have access to reliable, attractive public transport.
Transfer of fish and Brewdog freight from road to rail.	Long haul freight will be moved faster and more reliably, while releasing less carbon. Removal of over 200 pallets a day from the roads.
A lifeline for isolated communities.	Reverse the feeling of isolation felt in North East communities, as identified in the 2017 studies, encourage more social inclusion.
Support Aberdeen in reducing car usage in the city and establishing a Low Emissions Zone.	Provide a real alternative to the car, deliver passengers directly into the centre of Aberdeen.
Direct access to the entire UK rail network for medium and long haul travellers.	Further reduce car usage in Aberdeen by eliminating driving and parking in the city as Buchan resident's closest station.
Increase Capacity in Aberdeen Railway Station.	Provide greater flexibility in scheduling of trains in and out of Aberdeen, increasing resilience to delay and disruption.
Increase Capacity between Aberdeen Railway Station and Schoolhill Tunnel.	Provide greater flexibility in scheduling of trains between Aberdeen and Dyce, Inverurie and Inverness, increasing resilience disruption



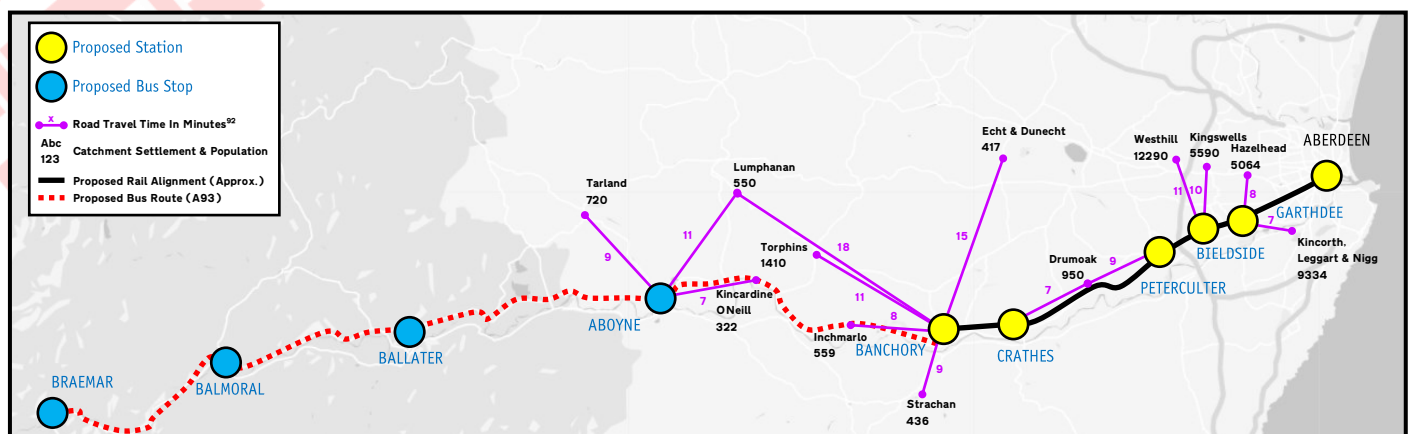
Proposed Benefit	Outcome
Improved Transport Mode Choice in Deeside Corridor.	Reduced economic impact of disruption on road network. Reduction in overall traffic.
Increased reliability of journey times across region as transport load is shared across road and rail.	Further increase in the appeal of Banchory to commuters, supporting population growth. Increased reliability of journey times will encourage modal shift from car.
Capitalise on growing Aberdeenshire rail commuter market, provide growth in home building in Banchory.	Raise Banchory to the same level as Inverurie, and see increased levels of home building as a result.
Direct link from Deeside to Airport links, allowing travellers to leave car behind.	Increased use of public transport due to improved convenience, less reliance on long distance taxi usage or airport parking.
Direct link from Deeside to Dyce for access to events at P&J Live.	Increased use of public transport due to improved convenience, reduced traffic after large P&J Live events.
Direct access to the entire UK rail network for medium and long haul travellers.	Further reduce car usage in Aberdeen by eliminating driving and parking in the city as Deeside resident's closest station.
Expanded travel to work catchment and zone of economic influence for Aberdeen.	Boosted employment and economic activity in Aberdeen and the surrounding area
Better inter-town links within Deeside.	Improved mobility for non car owners, greater social inclusion in communities. Modal shift from car to public transport for short journeys.
Easy to understand public transport connecting all of Royal Deeside, including star attractions and bucket list destinations.	Makes public transport the natural choice for visitors, allows tourists to use the service to visit all of Deeside, not just one destination.
Bring almost all of Aberdeenshire West of Aberdeen within 30 mins drive of a rail station, and all withing easy access of public transport.	No area of Aberdeenshire is left behind and tens of thousands of people have access to reliable, attractive public transport.
A lifeline for isolated communities.	Reverse the feeling of isolation felt in North East communities, particularly those without access to a car, encourage social inclusion.
Support Aberdeen in reducing car usage in the city and establishing a Low Emissions Zone.	Provide a real alternative to the car, deliver passengers directly into the centre of Aberdeen.
Increase Capacity in Aberdeen Railway Station.	Provide greater flexibility in scheduling of trains in and out of Aberdeen, increasing resilience to delay and disruption.
Make natural attractions accessible by public transport. (Munros, Long Distance Walks, Lairig Ghru)	Reduce strain on natural environment as car parks fill up and cars park on verges and damage surrounding area.
Interconnect bus and rail into one through service.	Reduce difficulty of planning return journeys via public transport, give people confidence in knowing they can find their way home. Ticket acceptance will allow Deeside residents to plan and buy their ticket for whole journey, increased ease of use will maximise patronage.
Better connect smaller communities in Deeside.	Smaller communities such as Torphins and Lumphannan can connect to the new system and wont rely on slow long distance buses.
Bus route does not deviate from the A93.	Provide journey times competitive with the car, maximise public transport uptake.
Provide opportunities for growth in tourism sector.	Tour, Accommodation, and Event Companies can reliably collect tourists from Stations and Stops without the need for an on site car park or regular travel into Aberdeen City.
Reduce Strain on A93 and surrounding roads as tourism increases with arrival of Cruise Ships.	Share load between rail and bus, reduce car traffic on road to safely accommodate more travellers.
Expand the existing Crossrail project to the rest of Aberdeenshire	Provide meaningful interchanges across an entire region, tying Aberdeenshire together into a much more cohesive area.

4 Population Analysis



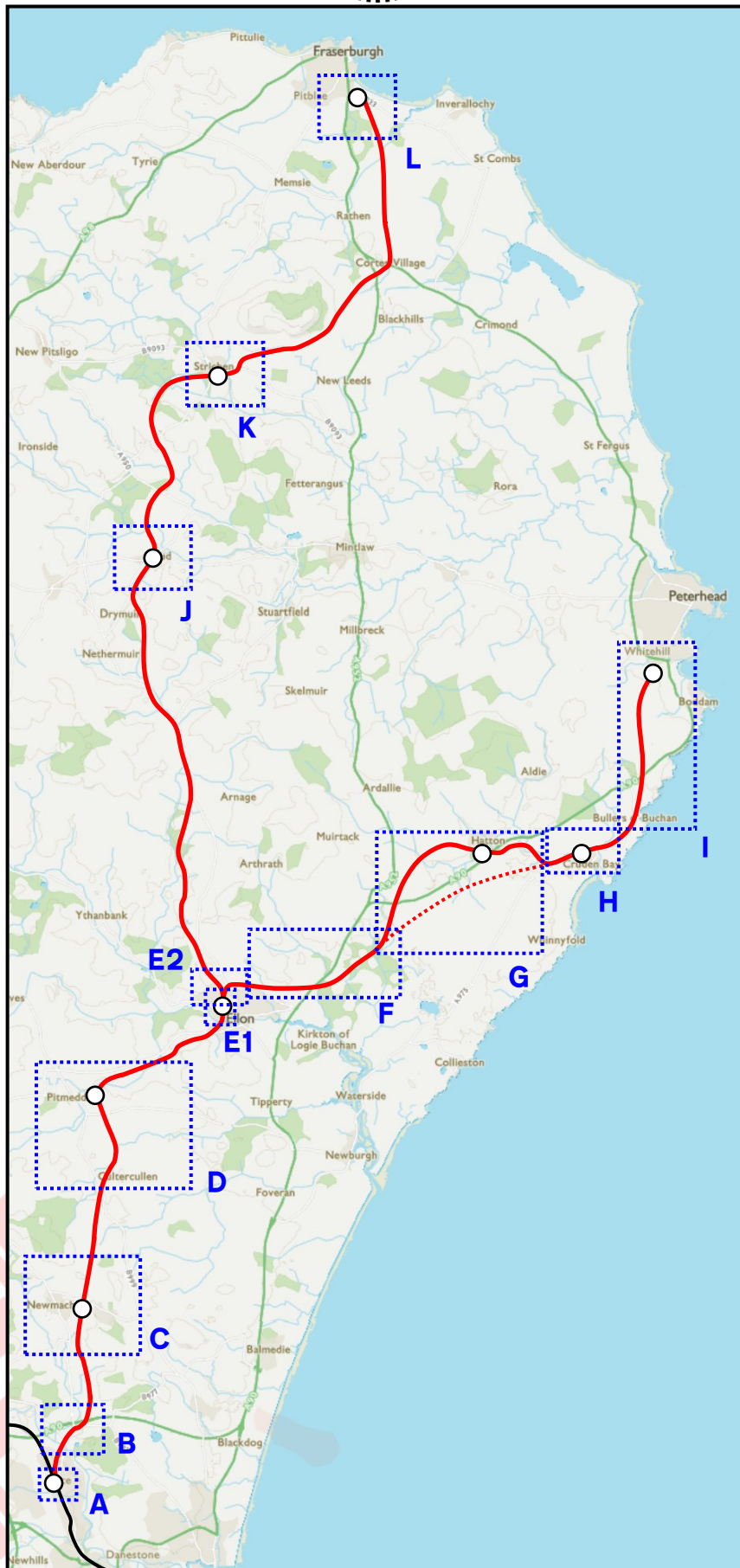
Station	Population	Catchment Population	Total Served
Fraserburgh	13,180	5,400	18,580
Strichen	1,020	6,255	7,275
Maud	910	10,700	11,960
Peterhead	19,270	3060	22,330
Cruden Bay	1,640	-	1,640
Hatton	900	-	900
Ellon	10,200	3,647	13,847
Pitmedden	1,440	3,669	5,109
Newmachar	2,500	4,190	6,690
Population Served Directly by Proposed Buchan Railway			51,060
Pop. in other settlements within 30 mins of Proposed Railway			36,711
Total in Settlements Served by Proposed Buchan Railway			87,771

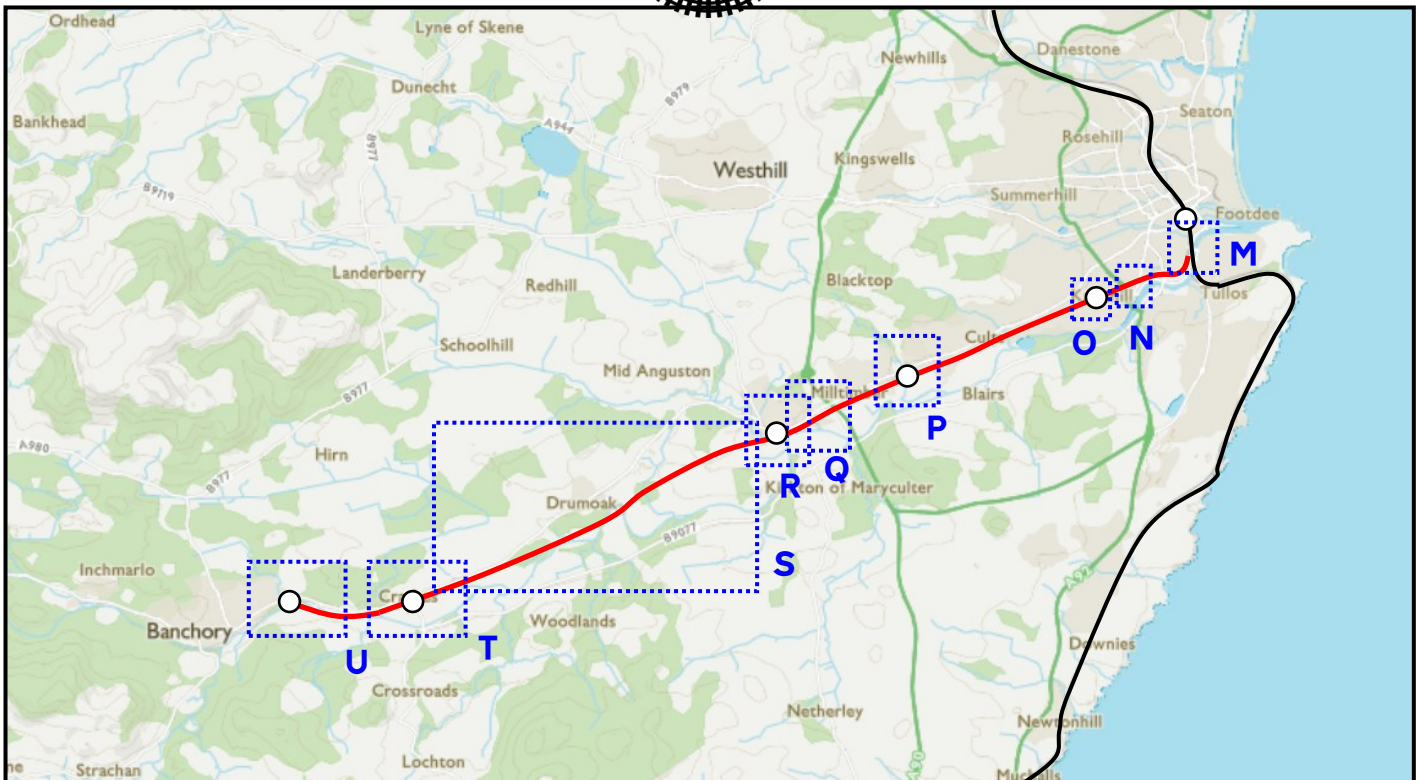
Station	Population	Catchment Population	Total Served
Rail			
Garthdee	5,374	14,398	19,773
Bieldside*	10,940	17,880	28,820
Peterculter	4,570	950	5,520
Crathes	192	950	1,142
Banchory	7,560	3,372	10,932
Bus			
Aboyne	2,910	1,592	4,502
Ballater	1,460	-	1,460
Crathie	96	-	96
Braemar	445	-	445
Population Served Directly by Proposed Deeside Railway			28,636
Pop. in settlements within 30 mins of Proposed Railway			37,550
Population Served Directly by Proposed Integrated Bus service			6,503





- 4.1 It should be noted that these tables do not take into account the significant population living outwith towns and villages that are within 30 minutes drive of stations along the proposed lines. Aberdeenshire has an estimated population of 261,470, by reopening both of our proposed railways (Buchan and Deeside), **almost all of this population is brought within a 30 minute drive of a railway station.**
- 4.2 Peterhead and Fraserburgh are two of the largest towns in Aberdeenshire. After Levenmouth is reconnected to the railway network, these towns will become the largest population the farthest from their nearest train station. This alone is reason to connect these towns to the railway, and by doing so we can bring tens of thousands of people in surrounding settlements into a new era of transport for the region.
- 4.3 Our Proposed Buchan Line will serve commuters along its entire length. In addition to this, the line will bring much better connectivity to the region north of Aberdeen and since 78% of tourists to Aberdeenshire come from the UK, rail will be the obvious choice for visitor's mode of travel. The 'on the map' effect documented by the opening of other railways will allow Buchan to capitalise on its world-class tourist attractions, and build this sector into a viable new arm of its local economy.
- 4.4 The catchment area of the Deeside line is limited by the two existing main lines. Many of the settlements within 30 minutes of Deeside stations are also within 30 minutes of stations on these lines. Therefore, Deeside's catchment is significantly smaller for journeys away from Deeside, compared to its catchment for visitors into Deeside. Looking at the population distribution along the former Deeside line, we can see that it is heavily biased to the Aberdeen end of the line. Rail experts have stated that a population of 5000 is a good rule of thumb for estimating whether a station would produce a positive result in any cost-benefit analysis. Unfortunately, this means that a railway would likely be unjustifiable farther west than Banchory by existing standards. However, the population of Deeside suffers feelings of isolation just as strongly as is felt across Buchan, additionally, Royal Deeside has unmatched potential for tourism growth in Scotland, therefore, we recommend an integrated bus service operate from Banchory, both to provide meaningfully improved public transport to the area, and to gauge whether tourist load is significant enough to bridge the population gap and justify reopening of the railway deeper into Deeside in the coming years.
- 4.5 The combined population of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire is over 450,000. Providing a connected network of public transport will allow the entire North East to thrive as the economy shifts away from its past reliance on Oil and Gas. The vast majority of residents will have access to Edinburgh, London and beyond with one change, and rail will be the obvious choice for medium length journeys within the vast region of Aberdeenshire. All lines connect at both Dyce and Aberdeen, providing meaningful connections to the Islands, as well as abroad at Aberdeen Airport and Ferry Terminal.
- 4.6 78% of all tourists to Aberdeenshire come from the rest of the UK. These medium and long haul journeys are the exact types that we should be focusing on shifting from road to rail in the fight against climate change. One change access to the rest of the UK from the North East also means one change access to North East destinations from the rest of the UK. Tourists will use a public transport system that is simple to understand, reliable, and gets them where they want to go. Establishing a system of through ticketing, or ticket acceptance between rail and integrated buses in Deeside will simplify the system. Full integration, meaning every train is met by a bus waiting to take passengers deeper into Deeside, will allow the transport system to operate reliably, and will remove the anxieties associated with transfers, such as missing connections or racing to buy tickets.
- 4.7 The recently opened AWPR bypassed Aberdeen and linked communities around the city directly. In the aftermath of the road opening, businesses along its length saw patrons from places in Aberdeenshire they had never seen before. From residents of Ellon visiting Stonehaven to see the castle, to folk in Westhill heading to Balmedie for an ice cream on the beach. Interconnection is just as important as connections to the rest of the country. Our proposed transport system will bind Aberdeenshire together, and transform some of the most isolated areas in the region into well connected and thriving communities.





5.1 The Buchan line leaves Dyce and heads north following the historic alignment of the Formartine and Buchan Way to Ellon. At Ellon the line continues on to Fraserburgh on the same alignment. From Ellon to Peterhead the line follows the historic Ellon – Boddam branch line. The Deeside line follows the historic alignment from just south of Aberdeen and continues to Banchory. To establish a modern railway, some modifications will have to be made:

- A** Dyce Station Modifications - Convert Platform 1 to an island platform, install new car park.
- B** No modifications required to cross AWPR, underpass tall and wide enough for railway services.
- C** Line can be straightened to remove tight bends, Newmachar station placed between Newmachar and Kingseat.
- D** Leave historic alignment at Udney Station to allow for a station at Pitmedden.
- E1** Reposition Ellon Station south of the historical site to avoid compulsory purchase and demolition (CPD) of flats.
- E2** Realign Boddam junction north of the historical alignment to avoid CPD of homes.
- F** Slight realignment to avoid CPD of access road and building a replacement.
- G** Realignment to avoid crossing A90 twice on historical alignment and station at Hatton, possibly better option.
- H** Reconstruction of Cruden Bay Viaduct.
- I** Leaving the historical Boddam branch after Cruden Bay to follow the historical Prison Railway into Peterhead.
- J** Using two platforms at one side of Maud to preserve other two for heritage railway.
- K** Repositioning Strichen Station closer to village.
- L** Repositioning Fraserburgh Station closer to retail park and beach.
- M** CPD of part of private gardens extended over the embankment (approx. 300m)
- N** Replace footbridge with heavy rail bridge.
- O** Reposition Garthdee Station - Two options available.
- P** Reposition Bielside & Cults Station.
- Q** New bridge over AWPR.
- R** Realignment around Peterculter to avoid CPD and reposition Peterculter Station to west end of town.
- S** Short realignment around Drumoak to avoid CPD.
- T** Extend existing heritage railway platform horizontally to retain heritage railway on other side.
- U** Reposition Banchory Station to east end of town.



This is a critical time for our campaign, STPR2 is underway right now and concludes in August 2021, this will determine the transport infrastructure in Scotland over the next 20 years, we are asking the Scottish Government for the following:

Commission a fit-for-purpose feasibility study into our proposals, including:

- A Buchan line from Dyce to Ellon, then on to Fraserburgh and Peterhead. (Section 4.3)
- A Deeside line from Aberdeen to Banchory. (Section 4.4)
- An integrated bus route connecting to the Deeside line at Banchory. (Section 4.4)
- Possibility of including these lines in electrification (decarbonisation) plans, or providing infrastructure for alternative tractions. (Section 5.3)
- New stations at Cove Bay, Newtonhill, Don Street (for Aberdeen University), and Bankhead (for TECA). (Section 4.1)
- Upgrading Aberdeen station and Clayhills Depot to meet capacity requirements. (Section 5.1)
- Different Methods of solving the Tunnel Problem, attribute costs to a separate project, it is unreasonable to expect the Buchan lines factor this into a Cost-Benefit calculation. (Section 4.3.7)
- Modes of operation, including a joint Inverurie-Montrose-Peterhead-Fraserburgh-Banchory Crossrail system.
- Methods of establishing through ticketing between Bus and Train in Deeside. (Section 4.4.5)
- Retention of the existing active travel corridors and possibility of additional active travel corridors alongside Ellon - Peterhead route, if this is the only option preventing feasibility, investigate alternative methods of funding through direct government active travel schemes. (Section 3.2)
- Connecting Craiginches Yard to Aberdeen South Harbour by rail for freight and cruise passengers. (Section 3.1.4)
- Provide stations long enough to handle special steam services as was successfully achieved on the borders railway.
- Feasibility of Fish, BrewDog and any other freight on the Buchan line, analyse cost vs benefits of upgrading track to W12 to handle refrigerated containers. (Section 4.3.4)

Aberdeen is the third largest city in Scotland and deserves modern, integrated transport connections as strong as those in the central belt, we must take action now to put our best foot forward in the fight against the Climate Emergency, and to alleviate deeply held feelings of isolation in these North East Communities.

Our Proposals connect Mountain and Sea, stitching the social fabric of Aberdeenshire together, and connecting rural communities in a sustainable way that that will have a meaningful impact on local lives, economies, and health. Aberdeenshire can enter a new era of connectivity, and leave the dark days of isolation since the Beeching Cuts behind. This project will bring a whole region into the 21st Century, and sustainably connect tens of thousands to the rest of the country and beyond.



How can you help ?

Politicians

Pledge your support to funding a full and fit-for-purpose feasibility study in your election manifesto. Lobby colleagues to adopt a North East Cross-Party partnership for funding and delivery.

Business owners

Tell us how our proposals will help your business to grow and create new local jobs.

Community leaders

Organise a public meeting in your community to raise awareness and canvas opinion. Approach us about providing a speaker.

Local residents and supporters

Visit the Campaign for North East Rail website. See how you can get involved and sign the petition, contact your candidates for May's election and tell them you want them to support our campaign.

Media

In addition to press releases we are happy to provide media comment upon request. We are a community group and can provide radio and television comment and written copy.

Visit our Website to sign the petition! www.campaignfornortheastrail.org

Facebook: Campaign for North East Rail Twitter: @CNERail

This document has been compiled by:

Jordan Jack (Train Driver) **Wyndham Williams** (Mechanical Engineer)



