



# TIME TO REOPEN THE LEVENMOUTH RAIL LINK

The reopening of the Levenmouth rail link between Thornton and Leven must be Scotland's top rail priority over the next five years. The economic, social, environmental and technical case for the project is overwhelming, as is local support.

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## Levenmouth is Scotland's largest urban area without a rail link: this should be next.

38,000 people live in Leven, Buckhaven, Methil and surrounding communities (plus a further 10,000 in the East Neuk catchment), but they have been cut off from the rail network since 1969. Reopening this connection would be an essential part of upgrading the Scottish rail network, and would remedy a damaging 1960s closure of a rail line that even the Beeching Report recommended should remain open.

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## The economic benefits have already been demonstrated, and business wants it.

The benefits associated with the line have been estimated at 1.3 times the cost of reopening it, rising to twice given the expectation of new housing and increased freight requirements. In addition to the expected development that the line would generate, it would also provide a rail connection for Diageo's Cameronbridge distillery (the largest in Scotland), their Leven bottling plant, Fife Energy Park, Methil Docks and others.

### Is it both practical and affordable?

STAG reports have been concluded in 2008 and 2015. Both noted significant positive impact likely from reinstating rail services. Existing Fife Circle services can be easily extended while the trackbed is fully intact. Estimated capital cost for reinstatement is projected at a conservative £78.4m (applying actual recent costs of the recent Borders rail line opening, a much more complex and demanding project, would require only £46m).

The line has been mothballed under Network Rail ownership, who are responsible for the cost of bringing the line back to freight standard.

The first mile of the branch line reopened for coal freight in 2012 meaning that there is already a live, signalled connection with the existing rail network.



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## The revival of Scotland's rail network

Moves to reopen sections of Scotland's rail network over recent years have a great success, substantially exceeding projected passenger numbers:

More than two and a half times as many journeys were taken than had been predicted on the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line in the first year after it opened in May 2008.

In the year after the Airdrie-Bathgate line reopened, the three new stations on the line saw almost 200,000 passengers between them. The 2008 Levenmouth STAG forecast around 390-415,000 annual journeys using the reinstated line.

The Borders Railway, closed in 1969, has just been reopened, linking Tweedbank and Galashiels with Edinburgh and beyond.

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### The area is in particular need of support given the economic problems it faces.

Levenmouth has one of the highest concentrations of deprivation in Fife, following the closure of traditional industries in the area, and 36% of local residents do not have access to a car. Fife Council estimate that restoring the rail link would increase five-fold employment opportunities for people in Levenmouth. It would bring jobs in West Fife and the Lothians within commuting range and, by integrating the area with the Edinburgh city region, help to end its relative isolation.

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### Improved rail access will cut congestion and help Scotland meet climate targets.

Both STAG reports noted the A915 and A911 roads serving Levenmouth suffer congestion, particularly at peak times, and predicted that these problems would get worse, as they have. Substantial volumes of HGVs on roads to Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes aggravate congestion and increase maintenance costs, and a shift away from road use would help reduce Scotland's carbon emissions.

These overwhelming benefits mean it's time for the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to get to work on reopening this vital link. There is strong and widespread community support for rail reinstatement, with over 10,000 petition signatures gathered over six months, and rising frustration at the area's continuing exclusion. **Local people have waited too long already.**