

Newburgh Stakeholder Engagement event

Detailed notes

Location: Lindores Abbey Distillery

Date: 11 Sept 2024

Attendees

The event was attended by a diverse group consisting of members of the community, business, transport, heritage, and nature sectors. The organisations represented included:

- Newburgh Train Station Group (Project Sponsors)
 - South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran)
 - Fife Council
 - Newburgh Community Council
 - Newburgh Community Trust
 - Scottish Wildlife Trust
 - ScotRail
 - Fife Coast and Countryside Trust
 - Visit Scotland
 - Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust
 - Lindores Abbey Distillery
 - Transportation, Fife Council
 - Tay and Earn Countryside Trust
 - Local Councillor and leader of Fife Council
 - Local RSPB Group
 - Newburgh Primary School
 - Newburgh Primary School Parents' Council
 - Abernethy Community Council
 - Historic Environment Scotland (provided written comments, did not attend)
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Introduction

The focus of the workshop was to discuss the potential impact of establishing a rail station in Newburgh with key stakeholders from Newburgh and the surrounding area. This event brought together community members, local business representatives, and stakeholders to explore the benefits and challenges associated with this development. The workshop was part of the ongoing Newburgh Transport Appraisal, conducted in accordance with the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).

The primary objective of the workshop was to gather insights and feedback from participants on how a new rail station could influence the local community, economy, and visitor experience. The discussions and findings from this workshop will be incorporated into the final report to Transport Scotland, strengthening the case for the proposed train station by highlighting its potential positive impact. These notes have been used to inform the Executive Summary submitted to Transport Scotland.

Workshop outline:

Activity**Purpose**

Group discussion on the impact of a station at Newburgh

Thematic groups representing Community, Business, Transport, Nature, and Heritage to explore potential benefits and drawbacks.

Quickfire idea generation: What would change for people if there was a station at Newburgh?

To delve deeper into the real-life changes a train station could bring.

Newburgh Station in 2035: Reflecting on several years of having a station

To encourage participants to envision the long-term impacts on usage, community feedback, and effects on business and tourism.

Better connectivity also benefits local businesses for example, the distillery could run a shuttle bus to the station for visitors, meaning people can visit without driving reducing car traffic through the town,

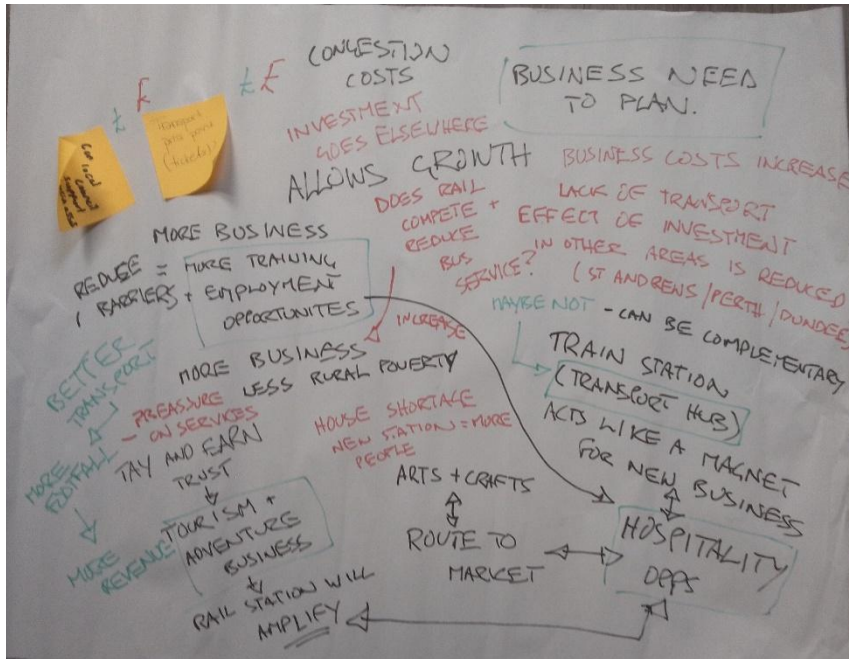
Well-being also came up in this conversation. Knowing that the station provides easy access to other areas would help people living in and around the area to feel more connected, and provide opportunities for socialising that are not currently available without a car journey – a station would open up access to visit the theatre, cinema, museums, restaurants and more, not just for school trips, but for OAPs and social groups, without the expense of hiring a minibus, or the need for people to drive. In addition, it was felt a station would contribute to the just transition agenda, providing opportunities for those on lower incomes to be less reliant on private vehicles.

It was also felt that a station would provide responsible access to campers and walkers, and that further environmentally friendly travel opportunities could follow such as e-bike hire at the station, a small community e-bus to transfer people locally to and from the station. And encouraging local people and visitors to consider travelling by public transport and mixing this with walking and cycling.

Other themes that came up under this discussion include civic pride – it was felt that people would be proud to have the station re opened, and that local groups would be interested in looking after plantings etc., as well as having the opportunity to introduce visitors to local traditions and heritage e.g. coble boat building. Alongside this, improvement of amenities came up - it was felt that a station could also provide public toilets, be a point for recycling facilities, and that increased footfall could lead to improved shopping facilities and provide a boost to the high street. In addition, further economic benefits could come from eco-tourism, cycling, weddings, and visitors to the annual light show, as well as access to the five coastal path, and new Bridge of Earn to Newburgh path.

Some concerns did come up in this theme in terms of the impact on house prices, and whether rent protection may be required in the future (again tying into issues of a just transition). Another concern raised was the construction itself, and the potential disruption this may cause, although it was acknowledged that this would be temporary. And finally a question was raised about whether local expectations were matched to a possible timetable – and what does this look like? This is something to be considered as the project progresses to ensure that the community is regularly updated with progress and involved in ongoing discussions.

2. Business Group



Key Out Takes:

- There was a sense that the station could lead to increased footfall meaning more revenue for business.
- A station would open up employment opportunities, both from new businesses coming in and employing local people, and from improved access to employment opportunities in other areas.
- A station could act as a magnet for new businesses
- Increased footfall and housing could increase pressure on services
- Timetabling of trains and buses should be managed to provide complementary services, rather than competing ones.
- Will the ticket price point be affordable and provide a real incentive to use public transport rather than drive?
- How can the council support local business as the project progresses?

Full discussion:

The business discussion focussed on the potential economic benefits a station could bring to the area – particularly in relation to a potential increase in visitor numbers. Growth and investment opportunities featured highly, with one example being given of a Tay and Earn Tourism and Adventure business, and another of the station providing an alternative route to take goods to other markets for local artists and makers. Currently it is felt that investment goes elsewhere, and that a station would help to mitigate this and reduce the impact of investment in other nearby locations that are more accessible in terms of transport opportunities.

A new station could mean Newburgh begins to act as a magnet for new businesses, particularly for the new housing developments, with the potential for new people coming into Newburgh due to the rural setting and easier commuting. This would potentially mean increased pressure on services.

This potential increase in business would also bring greater hospitality opportunities across the area, as well as potential for training and employment opportunities for young people in the area and reduce rural poverty.

Some concerns were raised about the affordability of tickets, and the incentive to use a new train service. This is balanced against the costs of congestion, with an increased population, and more private vehicles needed due to the current lack of transport options.

There was some discussion around whether the train station would compete with local bus services, although it was acknowledged that these could be complementary if the timetabling is done well.

And finally, there was a question raised around what support the council might be able to offer to support businesses in and around the area as the project progresses.

3. Transport Group

Key Out Takes:

- A station would greatly increase connectivity for Newburgh residents and visitors.
- The impact on bus services needs to be considered and timetables coordinated to maximise use of both services.
- Pedestrian and cycle access, and accessibility in the station design to ensure it is accessible to all users is highly important.
- Costs of operating an additional stop both to the operator and existing service users needs to be balanced against the benefits.
- Provision of a station would be a long-term investment in sustainable transport.
- The station could be a beacon for employment and economic activity in Newburgh and the surrounding area.

Full discussion:

The discussion around transport focused on connectivity, linking Newburgh to the wider region and population centres would open up many more opportunities for residents, as well as provide better opportunities for people visiting the area, for example, the link to the Fife coastal path, the new Bridge of Earn path, access to Pitmedden and the bike trails there were all mentioned. It was also acknowledged that there is currently a lack of travel options to onward destinations, other than on foot, by bike, or infrequent bus services. The connection with bus services was also discussed, with a need to coordinate timetables for maximum use, and the potential for a demand-responsive or community-led bus service. This is something that should be considered going forward.

Given the proximity of the station to the surrounding area and the range of walking and cycling opportunities, ensuring pedestrian and cycle access to the station was deemed to be important, as was ensuring that the station is accessible to all users. This is particularly important for those who do not own a car and could contribute to both physical and mental wellbeing of residents.

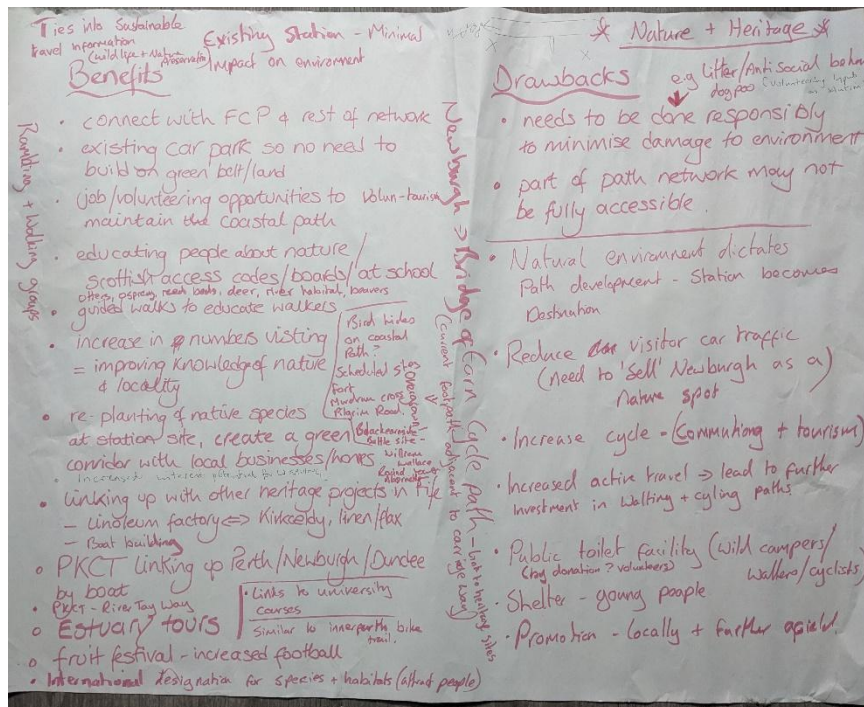
There was also some discussion around affordability. Partly in terms of affordable ticket price points, but also in terms of the operational costs of adding a station to this line, and what this

would mean for existing services, and service users as the additional stop will add a couple of minutes to each journey, for existing train users on this route. This needs to be balanced against the faster and more seamless travel it would give people using Newburgh station – especially those who currently drive to Cupar or Ladybank to catch the train.

The sustainable nature of train services was also raised, with a focus on promoting sustainable journeys, and reducing use of and reliance on private vehicles. The train station could well be a long-term investment in sustainable transport. In addition to this, it was felt that if train and cycling are to be promoted, then there may need to be upgrades to cycle provision on train services.

Improving transport links was seen to come with a host of economic opportunities that would benefit the community. These include potential for employment and work opportunities, improved hospitality services, visitor attractions and more. Examples include – accommodation provision, eateries, bike shop/bike hire, guided walks, cycle tourism, the distillery, the orchard to name a few. Attracting inward investment and generating income through the town was seen as a positive impact.

4. Nature and Heritage Group



Key Out Takes:

- There is a rich mix of natural and built heritage in and around the area, which is largely unknown.
- A train station could be extremely beneficial in making this part of Fife not only accessible, but a destination, particularly linking in with other nearby locations to create a networked visitor experience.
- There would be hugely increased potential for sustainable nature tourism, and 'voluntourism' with a station.
- As the plan is to build on a previous station site, which is now closed, the impact on the environment would be less than if being built on a greenbelt site and could be mitigated by native planting in and around the station once built.
- The construction should still be managed responsibly to minimise environmental damage.
- Visitors could increase litter/anti-social behaviour/increased harm to the natural environment, but this could be managed through campaigns and volunteer schemes to maintain and look after routes and nature sites.
- Increased visitor numbers could also lead to further inward investment, employment, and business opportunities.
- It would be important to have a well-developed promotional campaign to highlight the natural and heritage assets if the station is to have the hoped for impact on visitor numbers.

Full discussion:

The discussion in the nature and heritage theme focused on the range and variety of nature and heritage opportunities across the area, and opening these up to visitors, (and raising awareness with locals) as well as the potential for increased visitor numbers to result in improved amenities, and development of further infrastructure allowing even more people to access this area of Fife.

It was strongly felt that as the beginning/end of the Fife coastal path a station would be extremely beneficial for people walking a part, or the full route, as there is currently very limited transport options for people who want to start or end the route in Newburgh – currently people need to arrange to be collected, or work out transport options back to a location they have left a car, or face an extended trip back to where they are staying by public transport. It is felt that this puts people off doing this section of the path or is detrimental to the experience.

There was an acknowledgement that increased visitor numbers could have some negative consequences, such as an increase in litter or anti-social behaviour, but it was felt there are ways these can be mitigated.

Natural assets mentioned include: The reedbeds, and river life including otters, birdlife such as Ospreys and the international designation for habitats and species in the area.

Heritage assets mentioned include: the fort, Mugdrum Cross (Pictish) and Pilgrim roads, black Arnside battle site (William Wallace) round tower at Abernethy, as well as a history of boat building, flax/linoleum factory.

It was felt there was potential to make more of these sites, through the existing path networks, and also by linking up with nature and heritage assets in nearby towns to make the region as a whole more attractive to visitors.

There was some discussion about the potential environmental impact of building the station, but as the proposed site is on a pre-existing station site, and is not greenbelt land, it was felt if the construction is carried out responsibly this would be minimal and could be mitigated by native planting in and around the station site, as well as the potential carbon savings by train journeys rather than cars.

In terms of environmental education, the station also provides an opportunity for local wildlife and nature preservation talks/workshops to include discussion around sustainable travel, as well as encouraging sustainable 'Voluntourism' with groups of volunteers potentially arriving by train – e.g. it would open up the possibility of local nature groups working with universities to bring students studying relevant courses to complete projects in the area.

Increased footfall could also increase inward investment opportunities – e.g. further developing the path network, making as much of it as possible accessible (it was recognised that there are some sections of the coastal path where this may not be possible). Increased activities celebrating the natural heritage of the town – e.g. a fruit festival to celebrate the orchards, Estuary tours exploring the reed beds and birdlife, development of the 'River Tay Way', and improvements to amenities, such as public toilets, a sheltered space for visitors and young people to use, development of an equivalent to the inner forth bike route,

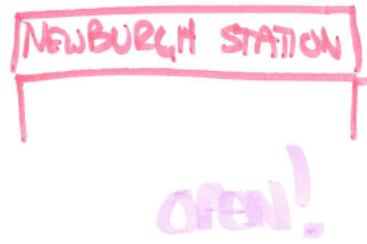
Another major point of discussion was connectivity – connecting to the fife coastal path, existing path network and potential new routes, connecting to the new Bridge of Earn cycle path, as well as to other transport interchanges in Perth, Dundee, Edinburgh, making Newburgh and surrounding area more accessible to a wide range of people coming from different directions.

What would change for people if there was a station in Newburgh?

The second exercise asked how people's lives would change if there was a station at Newburgh. The purpose of this was to probe deeper and consider real life impacts rather than generalities.

Each participant was given an A3 sheet folded into 8 squares, and 8 minutes to express 8 changes to life in and around Newburgh with a new station.

Following this the ideas were discussed in small groups. Each group was asked to pick their top 2-3 changes to share back with the room and this selection is shared below. The full list of changes suggested is available as a separate document.



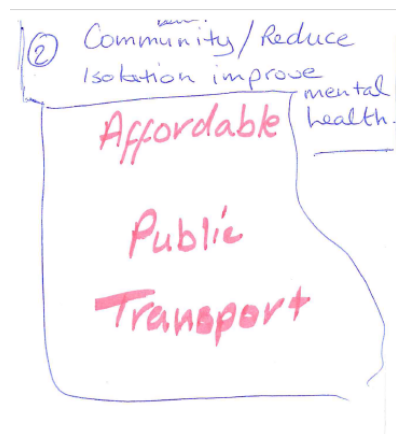
①

Attract
more
investment
+
jobs + access
to jobs out with
Newburgh

Attracting investment into the area leading to local employment opportunities as well as better access to employment opportunities out with Newburgh.

Job opportunities in Newburgh and the immediate area are few, and current public transport options do not allow for commuting any distance. A station could bring in more local business and open up other job markets for people living here.

A station would provide affordable and convenient access to amenities outside of Newburgh. This would allow for more social activities and reduce social isolation. People without their own transport can feel trapped or cut off from the world which has a big impact on mental health, knowing that there was an easy way to get to other places, could have a big impact on mental health for people in the area.



③ Improve equalities + Access for All - Mobility issues

Independent travel can be particularly difficult for people who have mobility issues. A single, reasonable timed train journey, rather than having to change transport modes, or take an extensive bus trip would make this much easier and more accessible, and reduce reliance on outside support.

① Cultural + education training apprenticeships - outward movement of learners - Accessing education

Pupils be able to make use of the train for educational trips - spiralling costs of buses - recently quoted over \$500 for a return trip to Capar for a music concert lasting 90 minutes

Accessing cultural opportunities, and further education came up for a couple of groups. Costs of hiring a vehicle to transport pupils to nearby cultural and educational experiences are prohibitive. Being able to take them by train would reduce costs to schools, and also show pupils they have access to these opportunities.

Chances for individuals to access education in a wider area - increasing costs of student accommodation shouldn't be a barrier to further education

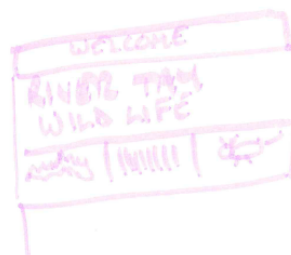
In terms of accessing higher education, accommodation costs for students is increasing, meaning lower income students need to choose between an extreme length of commute, or taking out further loans to be able to stay at/near universities. A train station would reduce travel time considerably, and allow students to stay at home while they study.

Bringing tourists

② Tourism + inward investment

into the area, and the potential income this could bring was also mentioned. Ideally, this would mean increased amenities for both locals and visitors – meaning people could eat out in Newburgh rather than having to travel elsewhere.

③ Nature + Biodiversity + Heritage + history



Crowds flock to see The Newburgh Lights



Raised awareness of the natural landscape and heritage of the area also came up in these discussions. People have a real sense of pride in the area, and feel it is important that this is celebrated and shared. For Newburgh to be well connected to the surrounding area, to become a transport hub and gateway to nature for this part of Fife, and for Newburgh to be 'on the map'.



Future Vision – Newburgh 2035

The final exercise asked participants to imagine they were in the year 2035, and that they station had been open for some years. They were then asked to respond to the following three questions:

How are you/your community using the station?

What do people say about the station?

And What does the station mean for business/tourism/community?

The full list of responses is available as a separate document, but a demonstrative selection are shared here:

Using train to
go to work in Perth/
Edinburgh

Local people - Using train to go to work in Perth/Edinburgh

Maintaining plants
around station with
local volunteers

Local wildlife group – maintaining plants around station with local volunteers

REGIONAL.
USED AS
AN EXAMPLE
OF SUCCESS
(TRANSPORT)
PLANNING.

Transport planners - Using Newburgh Station as an example of success, and a model for other small stations across the country

just accepted as
being part of life

Local people – just accepted as being part of life

People buy up
in Newburgh as
commuting town

Development – People buy up in Newburgh as a commuting town

What do people say about the station?

Life Saver
Best thing to happen
to Newburgh

"Lifesaver – Best thing to ever happen to Newburgh"

NEWBURGH
ROWING
CLUB
WIN ...

"Newburgh Rowing Club win...."

"Why did it
take so long,
to deliver?"

"Why did it take so long to deliver?"

- A good place for
a Sunday trip

"A good place for a Sunday trip"

This says "I can now
live + work in Newburgh"

"I can now live and work in Newburgh"

- Great connection for
active outdoor travel -
Completed Fife Coastal
Path - now to follow the
Tay eg. extended River
Tay Way to Hub.

"Great connection for active outdoor travel – completed the fife coastal path, now to follow the Tay" e.g. extended River Tay Way and hub

It's paid its way tenfold!

"It's paid its way tenfold"

What does the station mean for business/tourism/community?

3) Bustling high street
Not limited by parking

Bustling high street not limited by parking

Visitors to the distillery are collected & returned to the station by horse drawn (locally bred Clydesdale) charabang. The horses are kept @ distillery orchard & fed the by-product draft from the whisky.

Visitors to the distillery are collected and returned to the station by horse drawn (locally bred Clydesdale) *charabang* [a type of carriage]. The horses are kept at the distillery orchard and fed the by-product draft from the whisky.

HIDES FULL OF
FOLK WATCHING
WILDLIFE ON TAY

Hides full of folk watching wildlife on the Tay

The Primary school regularly travel to places like Perth mus, Edinburgh zoo, Dundee Science museum, St Andrews museum etc..

The primary school regularly travel to places like the Perth museum, Edinburgh Zoo, Dundee Science Museum, St Andrews Museum etc.

The FCP section here becomes more popular & Newburgh becomes well known.

The Fife Coastal Path section here becomes more popular, and Newburgh becomes well known.

While it is recognised that the station in itself will not make all of these things happen, the range and ambition of the ideas and changes shared shows the appetite for connectivity to the wider region and onward connections, and the possibilities that come with better transport options.

The discussion also shows the potential for change that could be accomplished by people in Newburgh and the surrounding communities, as well as attracting investment by people from elsewhere that a station could help to generate. Some thought should be given to how this could develop over time should funding be forthcoming, and a plan put in place to engage and develop community ambitions for development of activities and business opportunities that a station could generate, as well as a promotional campaign for this undiscovered area of Fife to be activated when the station opens.