

# THE FRIENDS OF THE FAR NORTH LINE



**Cairdean Na Loine Tuath**  
the campaign group for rail north of  
Inverness - lobbying for improved  
services for the local user, tourist  
and freight operator

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## Press Release - *Highland Chieftain* Connections at Inverness

**Tuesday 22nd May 2018**

The Friends of the Far North Line are delighted to see that, as a result of Richard Lochhead MSP's comments reported in the Press & Journal on Monday 21 May, a Virgin Trains East Coast spokesman has expressed support for ScotRail's efforts to work with Transport Scotland to resolve a timetabling anomaly which has a train from Inverness to Nairn, Forres and Elgin leaving at 20:04, the same time as the VTEC *Highland Chieftain* service from London arrives in Inverness, thus denying onward travellers a connection.

Whilst we naturally applaud all attempts to improve connections for passengers, we feel this is an ideal opportunity also to take permanent action on the connection from the 06:14 from Ardgay which arrives in Inverness at 07:43, allowing 12 minutes for onward travellers to board the 07:55 *Highland Chieftain* to King's Cross.

On the face of it a 12 minute connection is relatively safe; the truth of the matter, however, is that on arrival at Inverness, passengers have a fair distance to cover with their luggage to get to the London departure platform at the other side of the station. Add to this the fact that the Far North Line is single track\*, and therefore prone to delay, and it is easy to see why prospective passengers from north of Inverness don't risk the train but travel by road to Inverness.

This is a very undesirable outcome for the railways as, although the services are provided by different operating companies, one would expect that all efforts would be made to maintain the connection. Unfortunately, VTEC has been unwilling to hold the departure of the *Highland Chieftain* even for 5 minutes.

We very much hope that Transport Scotland, ScotRail and VTEC, or their successors, are able to work out a solution to these issues for the benefit of passengers. In the case of the southbound morning services, if it is not possible to change any of the train times, an agreement to hold departures for a few minutes to maintain connections would be very helpful.

Ian Budd - Convener FoFNL

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*\*The building of the Lentrane Loop, for which FoFNL has been campaigning for a long time, would also help to make this a more reliable connection.*

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