

FoFNL Station Survey 2022

STATIONS

WICK

- Signage: WAY OUT directs pax to circulating area, locked after 17:15 should direct pax to the exit to the left
- Small amount of blown litter
- Restricted supply of leaflets in ticket office
- No ticket machine - might be needed when ticket office hours are reduced
- "Train" planter in need of weeding and replanting
- "All busses (sic) now leave from the bridge". Really helpful to a visitor!
- Cycle rack located in the locked circulating area
- Car park not well lit
- Luggage lockers "out of action" and very tatty. They have been so for donkey's years and should be removed, or replaced if there is felt to be a need

THURSO

- Signage: WAY OUT directs pax to circulating area, locked after 16:55 should direct pax to the exit to the left
- Very few leaflets in ticket office
- No ticket machine - might be needed when ticket office hours are reduced
- Cycle rack located in the locked circulating area
- Car park not well lit
- Luggage lockers "out of action" and very tatty. They have been so for donkey's years and should be removed. Or replaced if there is felt to be a need

GEORGEMAS JUNCTION

- Boarded-up old station building in poor repair. Roof not watertight
- Car park not well lit

SCOTSCALDER

- Platform surface is large gravel - impossible for any wheeled contrivance, therefore not suitable for wheelchair access
- No tactile platform edging
- No ticket reader
- Private house with plaque naming Daniel Brittain-Catlin. Clock (not working). The "SCOTSCALDER" station board in the private house's garden is white on LMS maroon. Surely for authenticity it should be painted pale blue in Scottish Region colours
- Part of the point of this visit was to discover how clear the instructions are for the new kit. Otherwise there is no indication for pax unfamiliar with the routine to call a train to stop
- Car park is just unlit rough ground

ALTNABREAC

- The shed used as a waiting room is of wooden construction with a felt roof (the latter in good condition). The wood is in bad need of paint/creosote, and it would probably take 2/3 people 2 hours to strip off the old stuff and slap new on
- The platform surfaces are very rough ground, wheelchair users wouldn't manage,

but as there's no road access this seems irrelevant

- There are no portable steps, and the stepping distance is considerable
- No tactile platform edging
- Help button not working
- There is a private house, believed to be unoccupied
- No ticket reader
- No CCTV, but there is the usual "This is a CCTV zone" sign
- No request stop kit on site, and no instructions either
- The basic use-everywhere poster says "The taxi pick up/drop off point for Altnabreac Station is located at the station entrance" - it isn't as there's no road access
- Most of the discarded railway junk on both sides of the track at the south end of the station has been cleared, but there is still a lot left

FORSINARD

- Platform surfaces are gravel: impossible for wheel-chair; difficult for a pushchair or any wheeled luggage
- No tactile platform edging
- Help button not working on UP platform
- No ticket reader
- Double arrow sign not visible from the road
- Car park not well lit

KINBRACE

- Platform surfaces are gravel: impossible for wheel-chair; difficult for a pushchair or any wheeled luggage
- No tactile platform edging
- Help button not working
- Request stop machine delivered but not yet installed
- Car park not well lit or well maintained
- The gate onto platform has a bolt on the railway side which is impossible for a wheelchair user to reach without help

KILDONAN

- There is a great deal of NR building stuff, presumably temporary
- Platform is rough ground
- No tactile platform edging
- Help button not working
- The waiting shelter only has room for three, on a very high seat
- Request stop machine not yet delivered
- Signage: There is no double arrow. Half a mile away, at the road junction, there is a small fingerpost sign
- Car park not well lit or well maintained - rough ground
- Wheelchair users will have difficulty with the very rough ground between the car park and the platform

HELMSDALE

- No wheelchair access to UP platform. If a safety exception could be made, a track crossing, such as those found on more isolated stretches of line, could be installed
- No steps: check if needed

- Car park not well lit

BRORA

- No tactile platform edging
- Wheelchair access to UP platform is by a path and town pavements under the railway. This will take about four minutes so should be prominently listed in the appropriate places
- No steps: check if needed
- Car park not well lit
- Railway car park full on inspection visit

DUNROBIN CASTLE

- No tactile platform edging
- No station lighting. This issue has been discussed in great detail in the past and an offer made for external help with provision. ScotRail appears to have forgotten about this after a change of personnel
- No train indicator
- Toilet hidden and locked
- No sign indicating when the museum might be open
- No ticket reader
- Although this is a request stop there is no sign of any kit, nor instruction about how to call a train
- Signage: Very small finger post at roadside; no warning from either direction on a fast part of the A9 that there is a station ahead
- No cycle rack
- Car park is unlit rough ground

GOLSPIE

- Tactile edging in poor condition
- No steps: check if needed
- Signage: Small finger post at entrance: too little too late
- Station accessibility, inspector's view: There has been much development on what was vacant ground 15 years ago - several houses and a joiner's business, all with attendant car use. Access to the station (never great) is now a great deal worse. The exit for vehicles onto the A9 is in my view unacceptably dangerous - it would certainly not be granted planning permission (on visibility grounds) were it new build. Traffic is supposedly limited to 30mph, but at that point most vehicles southbound are accelerating uphill having just rounded a corner. This is an accident waiting to happen. There needs to be attention to how visibility from the right (i.e. southbound traffic) can be increased. As the A9 is a trunk road this involves Transport Scotland as well as THC

ROGART

- Help button not working
- New request stop kit there on both platforms awaiting installation
- Car park not well lit

LAIRG

- No tactile platform edging
- No steps on UP platform
- As there is an overbridge there is no access to DN platform for wheelchair users

- The location map is in the UP waiting area, where it is hard to notice. Not ideal for pax arriving from the south - the likely sort of pax who might care to need the information provided. Why not on one of the notice boards in the car park on the UP side at the foot of the bridge?
- Car park badly lit with a poor surface
- Unightly rust on the overbridge doesn't inspire confidence

INVERSHIN

- Appearance is a mess aesthetically
- Platform surfaces in poor condition
- No tactile platform edging
- No steps: check if needed
- No light in the shelter
- Disused buildings in same state as six years ago - appearance of renovations
- Although this is a request stop there is no sign of any kit, nor instruction about how to call a train
- Signage: Double arrow not visible from the road, but there is a signpost at the nearby junction with main road
- The location map incorrectly states that there are no buses
- No cycle rack
- No car park
- Very rough surfaces both on and off the station will cause problems to wheelchair users
- The approach from the main road is very unwelcoming. "Don't park here", "Private", "Turning only" - inspector not sure where to park

CULRAIN

- No tactile platform edging
- No steps: check if needed
- No help button, just a dead phone
- Good lighting but it was on in the middle of a sunny day
- The audio button on the train indicator produced undecipherable sound
- The ticket reader appeared not to be working as the screen was black
- Although this is a request stop there is no sign of any kit, nor instruction about how to call a train
- You have to reach over the entrance gate to unlock the bolt so wheelchair users will need help
- No car park

ARDGAY

- No tactile platform edging
- No steps: check if needed
- No help button on platform 1
- Platform 1 inaccessible to wheelchair users
- Flowers have gone, the six tubs all contain unshapely bushes
- Street map out of date on location poster

TAIN

- No tactile platform edging
- No steps: check if needed

- Lengthy route between platforms, avoiding footbridge, for wheelchair users

FEARN

- No tactile platform edging
- Condition of unused station building could be better
- The large, heavy steps are not fixed, so might present a danger to passengers or trains from vandalism
- No location map

INVERGORDON

- No tactile platform edging
- Help button not working
- Wheelchair users face a long route via High Street, c 6-7 mins, steep hill

ALNESS

- No tactile platform edging
- No steps: check if needed

DINGWALL

- Some litter
- No step-free access between platforms
- Some litter on track-bed
- Disabled parking is unclear
- ScotRail website states toilets available - there are none

CONON BRIDGE

- CIS gives no warning of approaching non-stop passenger train, no train whistle either
- Footway/cycleway from village centre is not clearly signed, and not shown on station map

MUIR OF ORD

- Some litter on track-bed
- CIS showed next train but not train standing on platform, as it was slightly late
- Shelter on P2 has roof missing following storm damage – reported to ScotRail in February
- Wheelchair users, unable to use steps, have a long and circuitous route between P1 & P2
- Ongoing liaison with Co-op site regarding new link to new informal pick up/drop off for P2

BEAULY

- Local info displayed continues to be partly misleading and inaccurate

INVERNESS

- The marble concourse always slippery when wet – a Chris Green legacy
- No tactile platform edging
- Help button(s): not sure. Notice through barriers beside end of platform 5 just readable from beyond temporary barriers on platform but didn't see where actual button is located. Barriers temporarily cordoned off at time of inspection after platform surface had been mopped

- Cold metal seating even in the separate waiting room which could be upholstered
- Track between platform 6 and car park exit walkway much cleaner than often the case. Only a small amount of litter, though quite a lot of oil
- Car park markings worn away, mostly invisible
- Complaints going back many years re draining of puddles on walkways at start of trainshed roof on both sides have not yet been resolved

Accessibility and safety:

- disabled bays in main rear car park substandard in design, operation and maintenance - including markings which are generally indistinct
- lack of segregation of pedestrians in rear hatched area which is frequently being used for drop off/pick up/parking with reversing and turning vehicles

Information:

- customer information posters and maps continue to contain some inaccurate and misleading details leading to potential confusion. Nearest bus stop at Falcon Square never mentioned. It is the obvious one to use for buses to Raigmore Hospital
- suggested that FoFNL should offer to assist ScotRail revisions using application of local knowledge and experience

Environment

- diesel fumes are a health hazard and engines are left running for long periods, eg first thing in the morning when most train engines are running
- particularly noticeable under the station's covered area along public pathway on remote side of platform 6 in direction of car parks and platform 7

Conclusion

Many of the issues were flagged up in 2008 and 2015 by previous FoFNL surveys. The great improvement since 2015 is the installation of CIS at almost all stations. Once the current database access and communication problems are solved passengers will be much better served.

The lack of train timetables on stations is understandable whilst timetables are changing frequently due to Covid and industrial action. Once things are back to normal timetables should be displayed.

The only station on the line to have bus information is Inverness. No other station has any bus timetables displayed. This is a real problem for travellers who need to continue their journey by bus.

The lack of street signage to railway stations needs to be addressed. Presumably this is the responsibility of the Highland Council.