

Joan McAlpine MSP
South of Scotland Region

Sir Richard Branson
Owner, Virgin
The Battleship Building
179 Harrow Road
LONDON
W2 6NB

Our ref: JM/RC

06 November 2015

Dear Sir Richard,

I wrote to you back in June 2013 on behalf of my constituents in Beattock, who are campaigning to revive their historic railway station and need your help. I understand that your commitment to help fund a feasibility study was instrumental in the fight to re-open the Waverley Line in the Borders. Like the Campaign for Borders Rail, the Beattock Station Action Group is well organised and enthusiastic.

At the moment, trains speed past Beattock on the largest stretch of rail without a stop in the whole UK. My constituents believe it could once again become an essential stop on the West Coast Main Line. Because of its place in history and literature, it has considerable tourist potential. It would also be an excellent stop off point for walkers keen to explore the beautiful Southern Uplands and the Grey Mare's Tail.

Given that Virgin trains stop in Oxenholm I have no doubt a large amount of passengers would alight at Beattock. Beattock is one of the country's fastest expanding commuter towns. Beattock and the neighbouring spa village of Moffat are beautiful places to live and a railway could encourage more young families to move their and commute to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Carlisle. There is a station available, land available as well as land for car parking.

Beattock opened in 1842 on the first line to link Scotland and London, and was operating until 1972. It is part of railway folklore because the line to Beattock Summit was the steepest gradient in Britain and locomotives had to be pulled up. Beattock features in W H Auden's poem for the 1930s documentary film Night Mail. You will no doubt remember the lines:

*This is the Night Mail crossing the Border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,*

*Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,
The shop at the corner, the girl next door.*

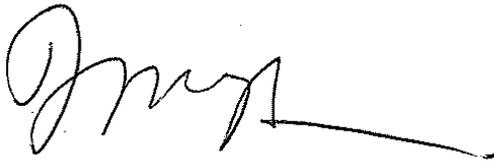
*Pulling up Beattock, a steady climb:
The gradient's against her, but she's on time.*

It also makes an appearance in John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* when Richard Hannay walks to the station from Moffat, before catching a night-train south to England.

Beattock Station is currently fifth on the Regional Transport Partnership's list of stations to reopen, essentially due to the difficulty that it is not within the ScotRail franchise. However, it is acknowledged that Beattock is the only community with an active campaign that has raised some money to put toward a STAG report. I believe that their case would be strengthened massively if a railway operator agreed to stop at the station.

I would be thrilled if yourself or Damien Henderson would agree to meet my constituents and discuss this. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan McAlpine', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joan McAlpine
MSP for South of Scotland