

ScotRail unveils Inter7City high speed train named after MND campaigner, Gordon Aikman BEM

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The life and legacy of Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Scotland campaigner, Gordon Aikman, has been honored with ScotRail naming one of its iconic high-speed trains in his memory.

The train naming is the train operator's tribute to a man who raised more than £500,000 in three years, to help find a cure for the cruel disease that took his life in February 2017.

It's a fitting memorial to mark the pioneering work of the founder of 'Gordon's Fightback' campaign, who convinced First Minister Nicola Sturgeon to double the number of MND nurses in Scotland and fund them through the NHS.

It also cements the ongoing partnership between ScotRail and MND Scotland, which was formed in April 2017, two months after Gordon's death.

Gordon was just 29 and working as Director of Research for the Better Together campaign ahead of the

Scottish independence referendum in 2014, when he was diagnosed with MND.

A year later, he was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours for his efforts to find a cure for this rapidly progressing terminal illness, which stops signals from the brain reaching the muscles.

Gordon's legacy extends beyond MND.

With MND Scotland, he secured a change in the law so patients who lose their voice due to a medical condition can access speech equipment through the NHS.

Gordon was also part of the campaign that succeeded in getting the Scottish Government to pay the National Living Wage to carers.

Gordon's Fightback campaign won the People's Choice Award at the 2017 Scottish Charity Awards, although, sadly, he died before he could receive it in person.

So far, more than £600,000 has been pledged in his name.

Alex Hynes, Scotland's Railway Managing Director, said: "Gordon's legacy is outstanding, uplifting, and impressive, inspiring our partnership with MND Scotland.

"The way Gordon continued to campaign to raise awareness about this disease while fighting against it, is a lesson in courage, perseverance, and human endeavour.

"We are proud to be naming one of our iconic InterCity high speed trains in his honour and look forward to the day when a cure is found for this truly terrible disease."

Gordon's husband, Joe Pike, said: "Gordon would be proud to see how far we have come in the fight against MND. And much of this is due to the incredible backing of supporters like ScotRail, its staff and customers.

"With the launch of the UK's biggest MND clinical drug trial in a generation, almost everyone with the disease in Scotland now has access to a drug trial.

"Gordon was obsessed with research because it provides hope. It means future generations may not have to go through the pain he did, and have their lives cut short by this devastating condition."

Iain McWhirter, MND Scotland's Interim Chief Executive, said: "In the face of a devastating diagnosis, Gordon turned his grief into a drive to fight for the rights of others living with MND and to fund a cure. His legacy will be remembered, not only here, but in the hearts of everyone he inspired.

"This plaque is a tribute to everything Gordon achieved in the short time he had left, and we are very grateful to all ScotRail staff and customers who have continued to support our movement to end MND."

Photo credit: ScotRail