

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

www.rages.org.uk

Issue No. 13 - April 2002

Discussions with GNER

RAGES wrote to GNER raising several points of concern. The Station Operations Manager for Scotland responded in late February as follows.

Our Route Car Park Manager, who is evaluating all possible options, is addressing the current car parking problem at Dunbar. This may involve expansion of the current facilities. I will keep you updated.

As far as the cycle lockers are concerned, we do not propose to alter the current arrangements other than to provide some form of shelter over the racks. The bicycle lockers do not currently meet TRANSEC guidelines.

Our Marketing team is looking into your comments regarding the stopping patterns ex London and ex Edinburgh. You will be aware that the summer timetable comes into effect on 2nd June.

Fare evasion does trouble me. We will undertake some random barrier checks but I have to say that the last time we undertook this exercise we found out very few passengers did not actually have a ticket.

Our alternative transport policy would normally 'kick in' after 60 minutes delay to services. This is not a blanket approach however, and we consider all options from the view of the passenger's best interests i.e. arrival time at destination stations, prior to arranging alternative transport.

Your email of 11th February refers to an incident concerning our 1730 service. Indeed we did have problems that evening, necessitating a change of train at Edinburgh. I have taken on board the comments regards the lack of announcements and general confusion. Whilst I agree that the situation was wholly unacceptable, the further delay was compounded by a passenger's actions and the involvement of the British Transport Police. We had hoped prior to this that the 1730 service would depart first.

I have forwarded the comments re pricing to our Ticketing Manager for his consideration. With regards to compensation, season tickets are discounted from the outset. Furthermore, all ticket renewals are currently benefiting from a 5% discount on the basis that Punctuality Moving Annual Average is now below the threshold at which we provide discounts.

However, with the advent of the new franchise we will be paying out compensation for season ticket holders on a daily basis, dependant on the performance of their services. The details of this are outlined in the Franchise leaflet and are detailed on the website. This will take effect from April 2003 and is in addition to existing Passenger Charter discounts.

Can I lastly take this opportunity to thank you for bringing the above points and comments to my attention. I appreciate the support you have shown us.

Editorial

Mrs Hayman, in her letter on page 4, about the siting of a new Haddington station, suggests that it could be on the north side of the A1 and that we should not insist on a more expensive option.

However, the committee has looked at several sites and we are still of the opinion that a more central site is preferred. While we believe Haddington needs a rail station and people could use cars to get to an out-of-town station, it is hoped that such a station will encourage visitors to come to Haddington and we would not want them to be dumped on the outskirts of the town. Also there are many Haddington employees who commute to the likes of the council offices and who come by car. Transfer to train would free up car park spaces in the town.

RAGES is not insisting on a particular site, but wishes to have an input to the study that is hopefully to be carried out for rail requirements throughout the whole of East Lothian.

Rail Passengers Council Meeting

Tom Thorburn and Barrie Forrest attended the RPC meeting in London on March 13th. Initial thoughts that it would be dominated by southern groups were unfounded.

The theme of the meeting was Performance and talks were given by: - George Muir - Director General of the Association of Train Operating Companies; John Hughes - Independent RPC member; Peter Garrod - Project Director of Midland Mainline; Chris Kinchen-Smith - SRA and Chris Leah - Director of Safety and Standards of Railtrack.

Statistics show that things are improving from Railtrack's point of view, i.e. infrastructure time delays to trains are decreasing as the network improves. We were able to talk directly with Mike Lunan and Helen Millar of RPC Scotland, Chris Kinchen-Smith about the East Coast Main Line franchise and Chris Leah regarding identifying the best person to advise on new station sites and rubbish left by rail contractors at

Welcome to this issue of The Rages Rag, which we intend to publish regularly. It will be the main means of communication to our members.

Inside Issue 13:

- News around the region - Page 2
- Proposed Dunbar timetable - Page 3
- Structure Plan - Page 4

The editor invites contributions which should be sent to him at the address at the foot of page 4.

North Berwick Service News

For four days during March all services were suspended on the line owing to driver strike action. This was on top of the driver overtime ban that reduced services to emergency timetable level for the rest of the month, with occasional cancellations and bus replacement. The discovery of ancient disused mine workings between Prestonpans and Wallyford stations, resulting in a 20 mph speed limit, is a further blow to service reliability. (*Ed: indeed, to all services within the RAGES area*)

However there is some good news ahead - the settling of the driver dispute should lead to a restoration of the full service in the next few weeks, although the 20mph limit, extending journeys by 5 minutes, is likely to be in place for several months. Class 322 trains are now rostered for most journeys. Although they have impressive acceleration, their unkempt condition, both interior and exterior, makes them look far inferior to older ScotRail units in service elsewhere. It is hoped that some refurbishment can take place so that their appearance is in keeping with the rest of the ScotRail fleet.

At our last committee meeting, we heard that James King, inaugural member, Vice Chairman and the North Berwick representative, has had to resign his membership of RAGES. He has applied successfully for a position with the Rail Passenger Committee for Scotland. There he will still be able to campaign for better rail services in our region. We wish him the best for the future and thank him for his work on our behalf during these last three years.

We are pleased, however, that Charles Marshall has agreed to be the new representative for this area and that Barrie Forrest has agreed to be Acting Vice Chairman.

Dunbar News

East Lothian Council will meet with the Strategic Rail Authority this month to discuss their Rail Passenger Partnership application for driver training from Drem to Dunbar. If successful, this will enable ScotRail to serve Dunbar with a much needed in-fill service to bolster the current GNER services. A proposed timetable, compiled by the committee is opposite. There is also an extra northbound GNER service proposed in the evening.

Committee members Ian Bowman, Barrie Forrest and Tom Thorburn, along with member Joyce McLean, carried out a postcode survey at Dunbar station on Thursday 21st March. 172 postcodes/addresses were collected from approximately 280 boarding the 07.47 and 25 boarding the 08.52 trains to Edinburgh, which is a return of 56.4%. This survey will hopefully convince bus operators to run local services to the station such that we can alleviate the car parking problem at Dunbar.

Passengers expressed points of view that we should be actively seeking to get an access to the south side of the line for the new housing development. It was also noted that there was evidence of some fare dodging taking place, as we were initially mistaken for ticket collectors. GNER staff at Dunbar were very helpful and made tea for the two members that stayed on to get the 08.52 passengers.

Reston News

Now that we are part of the Borders Rail Forum, Barrie attended our first meeting representing RAGES on March 15th.

Points raised were:

- support for funding for Reston Station Feasibility Study from Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and Scottish Enterprise Borders
- an appeal to SBC to submit an application to the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) for a Rail Passenger Partnership driver training funding to bring ScotRail from Dunbar to Berwick.

This SRA application hopefully would bolt on to the East Lothian Council application for driver training from Drem to Dunbar.

On April 3rd Barrie attended a meeting of East Berwickshire Communities in Reston School. Barrie is the Reston representative on the above committee and was invited by the Chairwoman, Fran Kymer, to give a talk on behalf of RAGES on their progress to date on the re-opening of Reston station. On conclusion of the talk, all party communities: - Cockburnspath; Grantshouse; Reston & Auchencrow; Coldingham; St Abbs; Ayton; Burnmouth; Foulden, Mordington and Lamberton were fully supportive of the re-opening of Reston station.

It was brought to the attention of RAGES that Scottish Borders Council would be submitting their views on the Edinburgh and the Lothians Structure Plan (E&LSP). On viewing the Transport Section of this draft document, it soon became apparent that there was no mention of a proposed Edinburgh to Berwick local rail service, unlike other Councils outwith Edinburgh and the Lothians. Tom Thorburn has written to Councillor John Elliot, Convenor John Ross Scott, Archy Kirkwood MP and Euan Robson MSP to have the aforementioned service with a new station at Reston included. Convenor John Ross Scott stated at The Berwickshire Area Committee Meeting on 26th March that a submission was being forwarded by SBC to include the above. Tom thanked all those involved with this submission on behalf of RAGES.

It is very important that we are seen to be part of the E&LSP so that when congestion charging comes into place in Edinburgh, alternative transport options are available for travel to the City.

It was interesting to note that the postcode survey at Dunbar revealed 31 persons travelling from Berwickshire to catch the first two services to Edinburgh – how many more are there in the nil returns?

Euan Robson MSP was invited to our last committee meeting, but unfortunately having been delayed at a previous meeting arrived after we had finished. We hope he will be able to attend a future meeting.

EDINBURGH TO DUNBAR – PROPOSED SERVICE

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

Operator		G	G	G	Sc	Sc	Sc	Sc	G	Sc	Sc	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
Edinburgh		0553	0700	0900	1010	1110	1210	1310	1400	1410	1510	1600	1700	1730	1832	1900	2100	2300
Musselburgh					1016	1116	1216	1316		1416	1516							
Wallyford					1019	1119	1219	1319		1419	1519							
Prestonpans					1022	1122	1222	1322		1422	1522							
Longniddry					1027	1127	1227	1327		1427	1527							
Drem					1032	1132	1232	1332		1432	1532							
Dunbar		0620	0720	0920	1042	1142	1242	1342	1420	1442	1542	1620	1720	1750	1854	1922	2120	2320

SATURDAY

Operator		G	G	Sc	Sc	Sc	Sc	G	Sc	Sc	G	G	G
Edinburgh		0700	0930	1010	1110	1210	1310	1400	1410	1510	1700	1730	1922
Musselburgh				1016	1116	1216	1316		1416	1516			
Wallyford				1019	1119	1219	1319		1419	1519			
Prestonpans				1022	1122	1222	1322		1422	1522			
Longniddry				1027	1127	1227	1327		1427	1527			
Drem				1032	1132	1232	1332		1432	1532			
Dunbar		0720	0950	1042	1142	1242	1342	1420	1442	1542	1720	1750	1944

DUNBAR TO EDINBURGH – PROPOSED SERVICE

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

Operator		Sc	G	G	G	Sc	Sc	Sc	Sc	G	Sc	Sc	G	G	G
Dunbar		0640	0747	0852	0952	1047	1147	1247	1347	1401	1447	1547	1701	1948	2146
Drem						1057	1157	1257	1357		1457	1557			
Longniddry						1103	1203	1303	1403		1503	1603			
Prestonpans						1107	1207	1307	1407		1507	1607			
Wallyford						1111	1211	1311	1411		1511	1611			
Musselburgh		0704				1114	1214	1314	1414		1514	1614			
Edinburgh		0710	0808	0917	1018	1120	1420	1320	1420	1421	1520	1620	1729	2012	2214

SATURDAY

Operator		G	G	G	Sc	Sc	G	Sc	Sc	Sc	Sc	G	G	G
Dunbar		0747	0905	0954	1047	1147	1213	1247	1347	1447	1547	1716	1908	2103
Drem					1057	1157		1257	1357	1457	1557			
Longniddry					1103	1203		1303	1403	1503	1603			
Prestonpans					1107	1207		1307	1407	1507	1607			
Wallyford					1111	1211		1311	1411	1511	1611			
Musselburgh					1114	1214		1314	1414	1514	1614			
Edinburgh		0808	0929	1018	1120	1220	1241	1320	1420	1520	1620	1742	1928	2129

1. Operators - G GNER and Sc ScotRail
2. Additional service from Edinburgh to North Berwick Mon to Sat 1610 – stop all stations and 1650 return
3. Suggested additional GNER Dunbar northbound stop at 1948 (Mon to Fri) and 1908 (Sat)
4. Sunday service to and from Dunbar as present with GNER
5. ScotRail timings to allow stop at East Linton

Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

I would like to use the pages of your excellent Rag to enter the debate on the siting of the Haddington station, assuming, of course, that the re-opening of the Haddington branch line does take place. Certainly the political will to invest in our neglected transport infrastructure seems to be positive at the moment - so all of us who wish to see this developed should keep the debate on the boil.

I would, however, disagree with Stuart Leslie in your last issue, in his preference for the old station site. Granted that a few more people could walk to the station if it was in a central location - but the majority of passengers would still have to connect by car. Imagine the potential traffic chaos at peak morning time, as commuters are driven to their trains, while school pupils converge on schools, on foot or by car or bus, all in the same area of town! A station and its associated car park MUST be out of town, and accessible without adding to existing congestion or risk to pedestrians. After all, we want the rail line to be used by people from the other end of Haddington, Gifford, the Hillfoot, etc. not just by those on the western side of town.

We want the line and we want it soon, so we must be pragmatic as well as visionary. The stark fact is that to terminate the line on the North side of the A1 would be FAR cheaper than constructing a new crossing. Access from the by-pass would be relatively simple. If we insist on the expensive option, we risk getting nothing. The Roodlands site would be equally expensive. (And probably incompatible with the planned extension of the existing hospital to incorporate the Herdmanflat facility)

I don't write off the objections of the residents of Gateside as easily as Mr Leslie does. The houses have been built far too close to the old line. You can't accuse a person of NIMBYism for objecting to the noise and the danger of trains running a few feet from their house walls! As a parent, I would be very unhappy with a level crossing in the middle of a housing estate. The Gateside and Knowsley Park residents have very legitimate concerns. So any attempt to impose a station in the centre of town, on either site, will certainly lead to major objections, possibly a public enquiry - inevitably a prolonged delay.

I applaud the success of RAGES as a pressure group, and will certainly continue to give it my support. But please, let's be practical; we are far more likely to succeed.

Yours etc,

Judy Hayman
The Knoll
Longnewton
Haddington

The Lothian Structure Plan and Railways

The Lothian area Structure Plan contains provision for a considerable increase in population. Indeed this is one of the few parts of Scotland where an increase is projected. In East Lothian itself, the population is projected to rise by 11% over the next 16 years and the Structure Plan aims to accommodate the rise with an additional 4,800 new houses. Where they are to be located is currently the subject of a consultation exercise, with the options being new settlement, an expansion of existing settlements, or a combination of both. Whichever, there is no doubt that many, or probably most, of these new residents will of course be working in Edinburgh and these additional commuters will require some means of travel.

Commuting by train has become increasingly popular in recent years, which of course has led to the revival in the fortunes of the North Berwick service, which came close to extinction in the late 1960s. The limited, although improved, service available from Dunbar has also grown increasingly popular. As alternatives to rail travel, some people commute by bus and of course many go by car, a choice that will become even more attractive with the imminent dualling of the A1 between Dunbar and Haddington.

However, commuting by car will likely become less of an option because of traffic congestion, lack of parking and the prospect of congestion charging within Edinburgh. More and more commuters will seek the option of rail travel, which is already at capacity point for peak periods. It is therefore essential that provision for increased local travel is included in the East Coast Main Line upgrade and specifically for a local service for Dunbar including a station at East Linton.

The question is also raised as to whether provision should be made for a railway along East Lothian's southern transport corridor that would reinstate Haddington to the rail network, either by light or heavy rail. Haddington is the administrative centre of East Lothian and as such, it also "imports" commuters who work there for East Lothian Council, the county's largest employer.

Simply reinstating the former Haddington branch line would add to the capacity problems on the main line and a purely branch service with a change at Longniddry would be unsatisfactory. Consideration of quadrupling the main line as far as Longniddry would have to be considered. A new light rail/tram route that also served Tranent would have to be a possibility.

We are indeed, much to the surprise of many, entering a new railway age in the twenty first century. In June the new Edinburgh Crossrail service will commence and will serve Brunstane and Newcraighall. It is a start, but we should now be looking to extend this service into East Lothian via Millerhill and Monktonhall Junction.

East Lothian's new railway age is fuelled by population growth and commuter needs, but it should also help rid local roads of unnecessary traffic.