

The RAGES Rag

SPRING 2017, Issue 68



The newsletter of the Rail Action Group, East of Scotland, bringing members up-to-date with progress on improvements to local rail services.

(left: The 06:22 Newcastle-Edinburgh at Dunbar at 07:41 on 10th March 2017.

Photograph: B. Forrest)

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New 6-Car Train Sets for North Berwick Line

From February 20th to the end of April, customers on the Edinburgh to North Berwick route will have six carriage trains on some services, up from the current four.

The extra capacity has been created as a result of the driver training programme for the arrival of Scotland's new fleet of electric trains, which is being carried out on

the Edinburgh-North Berwick/Dunbar route until late April. The existing Class 380 trains are similar to the new fleet and are being used by drivers to prepare for the arrival of the faster, longer, greener electric trains.

Customers using North Berwick have already seen the preparations as the station platform was extended

in 2016 to accommodate longer trains.

The timetable on the route is not changing, but 12 trains each day will be operated with six carriages until the end of April 2017. Then, from December 2018, Edinburgh to North Berwick/Dunbar services will permanently have new longer trains, with 40 per cent more seats at peak

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New 6-Car Train Sets *concluded from p1*

times.

Perry Ramsey, ScotRail Alliance Operations Director said: "We recognise that rail is a key mode of transport between East Lothian and Edinburgh and our trains are very busy, particularly in the peaks.

"And, as we share these routes with freight and cross border services,

introducing longer trains is the best way to add more seats.

"While this is a temporary solution, from December 2018 our new trains will be in permanent use on the route, providing a faster, longer and greener service for East Lothian customers."

Six car services are planned to operate as follows but this may change on the day given it is a

driver training programme:

North Berwick to Edinburgh:
07:55; 10:27; 12:20; 17:28; 19:05 and 20:25

Edinburgh to North Berwick:
07:13; 09:43; 11:42; 16:43; 18:14 and 19:45.

(Since the above press release from ScotRail, it has been announced that 6-car sets will be on the service from the end of 2017).

(right: Class 380/0 3-Car unit 380 007 at Drem forming part of the 18:14 Edinburgh Waverley – North Berwick service on 9/3/2017. Two of these units are coupled together to form the new 6-car services on the North Berwick Line.

Photograph Courtesy: C. Brace)



RAGES Barrie Forrest Awarded British Empire Medal

BARRIE FORREST BEM

RAGES is delighted that our Vice Chairman, **Barrie Forrest**, has been named in the New Year's Honours List. Barrie has been awarded a British Empire Medal for services to

the community of Reston and Auchencrow. He has been a member of the Community Council for almost 40 years, acting as chairman and vice-chairman during that time.

We also know how much he puts into **RAGES**. Barrie has been a member of **RAGES** since March 1999, the Reston Representative from 2001, and our vice chairman since around 2003.

Meeting With The Minister for Transport

MEETING WITH THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

As reported in our E-rag 431 of 20th November 2016, the Minister had offered two options as a way to progress the re-building of the two

stations at **East Linton** and **Reston**.

After due consideration, the councils agreed to accept option 2 which would see the stations construction form part of a programme of works within the next **Network Rail** delivery period

(CP6 from April 2019 to April 2024), which broadly aims to improve capacity to the east of Edinburgh. In addition, the councils would not be required to increase the level of funding above

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Meeting With The Minister for Transport *continued from p2*

that which they had stated was their limit. Also the construction responsibility would transfer from the councils to **Transport Scotland** and **Network Rail**.

On 8th February, **RAGES** Committee members, **Tom Thorburn** and **Barrie Forrest**, met **Humza Yousaf MSP** and **Transport Scotland** representatives, **Rose Tweedale** and **Gordon McLeod**. They were accompanied by **Councillor Michael Veitch** and **Jim Lamond** of **East Lothian Council** and **Graeme Johnston** of **Scottish Borders Council**.

Tom Thorburn noted that the two stations are now being delayed to some date between 2019 and 2021, which is up to five years later than **Keith Brown MSP**'s letter of October 2014. How can the good people of these communities faith in this house and Buchanan House be restored?

The Minister invited the Council representatives to give an account of their views on option 2. The general consensus was that given the tight budgetary position of local authorities the Councils were happy to move the stations into option 2 as there was no way that they could make up the balance required to construct the Stations.

RAGES appealed to the Minister to give assurance that the station construction will commence in January 2019 and that due process would be carried out with the ORR to ensure that paths for an hourly service would be available and protected as we were extremely disappointed that we were now not going to see the stations built until some point in CP6, but accepted that we were where we were given the contracting budgets.

Given that the stations are simple 2 off 4 car platform stations, the point was pressed that construction time should be quick, in the order of less than a year such that we can see them opened as soon as possible in CP6.

Tom Thorburn asked the Minister to give a date some time in 2020 for the stations to open but he would not commit to a definitive date but promised he would look into this.

After more pressing discussion regarding **Network Rail**'s programme of work in South East Scotland, the Minister promised that our stations would be the priority. Barrie enquired if **Network Rail** would be starting to carry out survey work to enable plans to be submitted for car parks and access roads in March and April this year. The Minister was unsure of this, but **Transport Scotland** informed the meeting that discussions were already underway between themselves and **Network Rail** on CP6 work.

The Minister then confirmed that all parties including **RAGES** would be invited to high level meeting with **Network Rail** sometime in March.

RAGES then invited the Minister to attend an April meeting in **Reston Community Hall**. He declared his acceptance, but noted that he would have to take advice given the close proximity of the local elections in May.

We also raised two other points:-

- **Fares at Dunbar**, which is a **ScotRail** station, are set by **Virgin Trains East Coast**. This is grossly unjust given that **ScotRail** have just increased their fares by 1.9% whereas **VTEC** increased Dunbar passengers' fares by 5%. In addition, these passengers are unique in that they have to pay £4 to park their cars, unlike passengers from the other six stations in East Lothian.

Also there are no off-peak fares available from Dunbar, again unlike the other **ScotRail** stations.

RAGES asked the Minister to have this situation addressed in favour of Dunbar station passengers.

- Dunbar station requires additional services for this rapidly expanding town. Our passenger statistics show that there are in excess of 460 passengers boarding the first three Edinburgh bound services (07:00, 07:42 and 08:56).

Given that there are now another 1500 houses planned for Dunbar, this further reinforces the need for additional services especially early morning services. These services should be provided by a **ScotRail** service which will have the additional benefit of protecting paths required for East Linton and Reston stations and relieving overcrowding on trains that serve Wallyford and Musselburgh.

RAGES therefore asked the Minister to have additional **ScotRail** services provided for Dunbar.

However, due to shortage of time, these two Dunbar points were very rushed through but the Minister did agree to look at these issues and requirement respectively and would get back to **RAGES**.

In conclusion, Tom Thorburn said that at the meeting the Minister was attentive to our desperate requirement for our stations. All we need now is for him to positively follow up on the assurances he gave **RAGES**.

POST-MEETING UPDATES

1. A letter has since been received from the Minister, Humza Yousaf, as a result of which:-

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Meeting With The Minister for Transport *concluded from p3*

- The meeting at **Reston Community Hall** is not taking place due to proximity of Local Elections;

- Enquiries are taking place to have Dunbar's Fare pricing transferred to **ScotRail** by next year;

- **RAGES** will meet with **Damien Henderson** in Edinburgh on 29th March at 14:00.

The full text of the Minister's letter is reproduced below:-

"Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter regarding services at Dunbar Station and a delivery date for Reston and East Linton stations.

It was good to meet with you on 8 February to discuss my increased funding offer which will allow the stations to move forward. I am delighted that East Lothian and the Scottish Borders councils have accepted this offer and I look forward to working with them to deliver rail infrastructure to meet the needs of the local communities around Reston and East Linton.

As I advised at the meeting, we are agreed that the stations will be delivered in control period 6 (2019-2024). They will be part of a bigger package of work currently being developed to improve capacity on the East Coast Main Line and I will ensure that these improvements will be a priority commitment in CP6.

I had suggested a further meeting in March with high level council officials, **RAGES** and **Network Rail** but I am conscious that the local authority pre-election period starts

in March. It may be more appropriate at this stage, therefore, for officials to meet with **Network Rail** to agree how to progress the project. For the same reason, I am unable to accept your kind invitation to **RAGES** April meeting at Reston community hall.

I note your request for more services through Dunbar station. The advantage of the funding option chosen by the councils is that it addresses the capacity constraints on the route. It allows, from a service perspective, an opportunity to assess the capacity and infrastructural implications of additional East Coast services, the new **TransPennine Express** services (Newcastle-Edinburgh), the **First Group's** Open Access service (Edinburgh-London) and how these services might interact with a **ScotRail** calling pattern at Reston Station on flows between Edinburgh and Berwick upon Tweed.

You may also be aware that I have authorised the construction of a second platform at Dunbar Station which will allow stopping services to be routed more quickly through the area. This platform, which is scheduled to be complete by 2019/20, will be long enough to accommodate 10-car Super Express trains and will include a footbridge with lifts, providing step free access between the platforms. **Network Rail** is also working with East Lothian Council who have an aspiration to extend the existing car park to the front of the station on **Network Rail** land. There will be an integrated plan that allows work to start on the car park extension when the area is no longer required by the contractor.

With regard to your enquiries in relation to fares at Dunbar Station, I understand that there are off-peak fares available (singles and day returns) the price of which are set by **Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC)**. I

can confirm that Standard Day Returns and 7 Day First/7 Day Standard tickets increased by 1.9% but Cheap Day Returns/Cheap Day Singles and First Day Return/First Day Single tickets increased by 4.9%.

Cross border passenger services, such as those provided by **Cross Country Trains** and **VTEC**, are operated under franchises that are specified and awarded by the UK Government (with the exception of the Caledonian Sleeper service). Scottish Ministers are entitled to offer advice on the specification of these services to the Secretary of State for Transport as they relate to Scotland, however, we do not have any contractual or financial agreement with any Train Operating Company operating under a Department for Transport franchise.

However, as you note, **ScotRail** now operates Dunbar Station and it plans this year to investigate the ownership and transfer of fares flows at the station. **ScotRail** is also currently reviewing the car parking policy at all stations with a view to looking at capacity and providing a better, more secure service for **ScotRail** customers. As part of this review Michael Hall, **ScotRail** Programme Transformation Manager, has been meeting with local authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships to understand the issues in their areas. You may wish to contact Michael directly at michael.hall@scotrail.co.uk to make him aware of your concerns.

I hope this is helpful.

I am copying this response to Iain Gray MSP as requested in his letter dated 8 February.

Humza Yousaf"

2. The meeting which was planned to be held at Reston Community Hall has now been re-scheduled for 22nd June, venue to be Holyrood.

New Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) Services

NEW EAST COAST SERVICES

RAGES are delighted to announce that after all their meetings with **Virgin Trains East Coast** to negotiate additional calls for Dunbar and Berwick, three totally new services have been introduced. These are:

Fridays only 22:01 Edinburgh to Newcastle, calling at Dunbar 22:21, Berwick 22:46, Alnmouth 23:07, Morpeth 23:24 and Newcastle 21:56;

Saturdays only 20:00 Edinburgh to Newcastle, calling at Dunbar 20:20, Berwick 20:45, Alnmouth 21:06, Morpeth 21:26 and Newcastle 21:43; and

Sundays only 08:45 Newcastle to Edinburgh, calling at Morpeth 09:00, Alnmouth 09:16, Berwick 09:40, Dunbar 10:04 and Edinburgh 10:28.

None of these three new services is

yet shown on the new Winter Timetables published by **Virgin Trains East Coast** or **ScotRail**. However, they are shown online on National Rail Enquiries.

RAGES are grateful for these new services and will continue discussions with **Virgin Trains East Coast** to have a mid-morning Edinburgh to King's Cross train call at Dunbar and a mid-morning to noon King's Cross departure service call at Dunbar.

RAGES Response to CrossCountry's Proposed Timetable Changes

*Reproduced below are the letter sent by Tom Thorburn to **CrossCountry Trains (XC)**, concerning proposed timetable changes, together with a subsequent letter sent to **Richard Gibson, Head of Communications at XC**. A copy of the proposals letter was also sent to **John Lamont, Iain Gray, Rachael Hamilton, Paul Wheelhouse, and the Transport Minister Minister, Humza Yousaf:-***

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of **Rail Action Group, East of Scotland**, I would like to record our observations and recommendations with regard to **Cross Country's (XC)** proposed changes to services in our area.

07:00 Dunbar to Glasgow Central via Carstairs and Motherwell. Proposal is to reduce the number of seats on this train from 262 to 200 (5 car Voyager to 4 car Voyager).

Response:- We would advise against this reduction in seats as this train conveys 130+ Dunbar passengers daily with a high proportion of these passengers continuing to Motherwell and Central.

09:25 Plymouth to Aberdeen. Your proposal is to terminate this train in Edinburgh with through passengers to Aberdeen having to use an alternative provider (**ScotRail**) to take them forward. Justification for this being that the XC service is lightly loaded after Edinburgh.

Response:- Our observations have shown this to the contrary as far as passenger numbers beyond Edinburgh are concerned. In deed on occasions when your train has terminated in Edinburgh due to no staff being available to take the train forward, passengers were very inconvenienced by having to

squeeze onto a **ScotRail** service with their luggage. One of our members uses this service between Dunbar and Inverkeithing and struggles to get off the train due to the volume of passengers standing not just in the vestibules but in the aisle.

Aberdeen to Penzance service. Your proposal is to change this to Edinburgh to Penzance, with **ScotRail** filling in from Aberdeen to Edinburgh.

Response:- Again our observations show that passengers with luggage do not wish to have broken journeys i.e. changing from one train to another. As such we would strongly advise not to change the current timetable as far as this train is concerned.

Conclusions:-

Your consultation document shows that XC are not hiring in any extra

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**RAGES Response to
CrossCountry's Proposed
Timetable Changes concluded
from p5**

train sets to provide seats for passengers who are currently standing apart from using two spare driver cars to make up a 4 car set by stealing 2 cars from 2, five car sets (with the result they then become 4 car sets). In order to alleviate this problem you are 'massaging' the sets you currently have by stripping out trains from services where you possibly see the loadings being lighter.

We feel that this is totally inadequate given the large increase in passenger numbers (and these are expected to continue to grow) since these services we first put in place with the current train set formations. Extra carriages should be added to all current services as a minimum to alleviate the problem of overcrowding and lack of luggage space of XC trains.

The document states that with Edinburgh to Aberdeen, Dundee to Aberdeen and Aberdeen to Edinburgh paths that you will be giving up will be available to another operator, and that operator would transport XC's current

passengers. Given the precarious delivery of Electrification of London Paddington to Cardiff and Swansea, the 125 sets that the document states would be able to take your passengers onward from Edinburgh, etc., we would err on the cautious side as these 125 sets will not be released by **South West Trains** until their line and Electric Hitachi trains have been commissioned. Given today's climate I don't see that coming in anywhere near the 2017 date.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Tom Thorburn,

Chairman

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

*Subject: **CROSS COUNTRY
PLYMOUTH ABERDEEN SERVICE***

Dear Richard,

I submitted a reply on behalf of **RAGES** to your Consultation Document, sadly to date I have heard nothing from yourselves at **CrossCountry Trains**.

Tonight, the 17:33 at Dunbar where 32 passengers boarded, (Plymouth

to Aberdeen service) which is normally a 5 car voyager set, sadly had only 4 cars with the reservation system suspended. This train is one that your consultation wishes to terminate in Edinburgh, well I can tell you this service was packed when it arrived in Dunbar and after Edinburgh all that can be said is it was chaotically overloaded with not just the vestibules full of passengers, but the aisles as well. In addition, the 17:08 Edinburgh to Bristol which arrived in Dunbar at 17:27 had only 4 cars, was overcrowded and no refreshment/catering.

These passenger numbers are totally at odds with those quoted in the Consultation for justification for withdrawal of services north of Edinburgh. Can you please assure me that you are actively pursuing a solution to these overcrowding issues on the above service and also taking into consideration the points raised by ourselves to your Consultation?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Tom Thorburn

Chairman,

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

RAGES Letter to Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) Fares Increase at Dunbar

*Reproduced below are the letter sent by Tom Thorburn to **David Horne**, Chairman of VTEC, concerning fares increases at Dunbar, together with the press release issued by **RAGES** following this letter:-*

Dear David,

Members have been in touch with our committee to complain as to why they are having to pay some 5% more for their fares in the

New Year. This contrasts strongly with fares from North Berwick where I have shown the difference

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RAGES Letter to Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) Fares Increase at Dunbar concluded from p6)

between the two sets of fares below.

Dunbar to Edinburgh return £12.30 presently, New Year £12.90 Dunbar to Edinburgh single £8.00 presently, New Year £8.40 North Berwick to Edinburgh peak return presently £11.20, New Year £11.40 North Berwick to Edinburgh off peak return £6.80 presently, New Year £6.90 North Berwick to Edinburgh off/peak single £6.40 presently, New Year £6.50

Given that Dunbar Station is now operated by **ScotRail** (as is North Berwick), **RAGES** are somewhat puzzled as to why their fares are still set by yourselves at **Virgin Trains East Coast** and more importantly the difference in fares increase in the New Year and finally that there is no off peak fare from Dunbar.

The **RAGES** Committee look forward to hearing from you and meeting with you to discuss other matters.

Tom Thorburn,

Chairman,

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

(Press Release):-

DUNBAR PASSENGERS DOUBLY DISCRIMINATED AGAINST, SAYS RAGES

Tom Thorburn, Chair of **Rail Action Group East of Scotland (RAGES)**

announced today that travellers in Dunbar were being treated as second class citizens, compared to travellers in other parts of the county.

“Dunbar is an extremely busy station” said Tom, “But not only do passengers have to put up with higher ticket prices because fares are set by **Virgin Trains** and not **ScotRail**, as they are on other East Lothian routes, but they have to pay to park their cars at the station. No other passengers in East Lothian have to pay for car parking. Dunbar and further afield residents who use Dunbar Station are being treated as second class citizens by the rail companies. I will be raising this as an

urgent issue with the **Transport Minister, Humza Yousaf**, when I meet him next week”. In addition, **RAGES** have written to **David Horne**, Chairman of **Virgin Trains East Coast** highlighting this anomaly of fares at Dunbar and await feedback on their review of our issues.

Recent passenger counts by **RAGES** have shown almost 500 travellers a day using the first three northbound trains, the 7.00, 7.42 and 8.56.

“Rail usage is steadily increasing at Dunbar” said Tom. “Of course it’s a good thing to get cars off the roads, but passengers should not be treated as cash cows for the benefit of the rail companies. Let us remember, some 1500 new homes are planned for Dunbar and these additional people along with the existing populace are going to need a Rail Service that befits this town”.

John Yellowlees Retirement

JOHN YELLOWLEES RETIRES FROM SCOTRAIL

(by **Tom Thorburn**, **RAGES** Chairman)

John Yellowlees retired after a long career in the Rail Industry. I first met John at a meeting in 1995/6 between Railtrack (remember them), the North British Railway Study Group and Dunbar History Society. This meeting

was to discuss and organise the 150th celebrations of the opening of the North British Railway from Edinburgh to Berwick. John was representing Railtrack and was the driving force behind the large 150th Anniversary Sign being erected at Dunbar Station. **RAGES** have enjoyed much advice over the years from John and he was always willing to speak at our Open Meetings.

John will be very much missed in the **RAGES** ‘contact for advice’ list and on behalf of the ‘Group’, may I wish him a long and happy retirement. I say retirement but John has agreed to take up the post of **ScotRail**’s first ‘Honorary Rail Ambassador’ – a very worthy and deserved title I may add.

RAGES works to

- Improve the rail service between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed.
- Have East Linton and Reston stations re-opened for active use.
- Improve the level of service to North Berwick.
- Consider the implications with regard to car parking and bicycle storage at stations between Waverley and Berwick-upon-Tweed.
- Keep under scrutiny the standards of passenger facilities at stations between Waverley and Berwick upon Tweed, including North Berwick, and to draw the attention of the relevant bodies to shortcomings which arise.
- Re-open the branch line from Longniddry to Haddington.
- The group, being environmentally minded, will actively strive to encourage rail travel within its geographical area.



RAGES needs your support

RAGES (Rail Action Group, East of Scotland) is the rail users campaign group for the area between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed, including the North Berwick service.

Our aim is to persuade the Government, both at national and local level, train operators and **Network Rail** to improve the level of service to stations in our area and to seriously consider re-opening key stations such as East Linton, Reston and Haddington.

Please join us to lend your support.

Membership will give you a say in how we influence the rail companies to improve local train services. Additionally you will get up-to-date information on significant changes in rail matters, and a regular newsletter.

The annual subscription is £4 for individual membership or £10 for corporate membership, such as community councils and organisations, and is renewable on 1st April each year.

Please send your completed form with your remittance (made payable to Rail Action Group, East of Scotland) to:

Allison Cosgrove
 Membership Secretary (RAGES)
 13 Stories Park
 East Linton
 EH40 3BN

I enclose my first RAGES membership fee of £4 / £10*. (* Delete as applicable)

Title Surname Forename(s)

Company

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