

# The RAGES Rag

SUMMER 2018, Issue 71



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

*left: (L to R) Lisa Davidson, Tom Thorburn, Humza Yousaf, Barrie Forrest, Paul Wheelhouse, Alice Fisher, Helen Laing – see article below.*

*(Photograph: Scottish Parliament)*

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## Meeting With The Scottish Transport Minister

### MEETING WITH TRANSPORT MINISTER 5<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2018

**RAGES** members met with Paul Wheelhouse MSP, and Humza Yousaf the Transport Minister on 5 June at Holyrood. Alice Fisher and Lisa Davidson who organised a Petition seeking the re-opening

of Reston Station were present as were Berwickshire Councillor Helen Laing; two representatives from Transport Scotland, Barrie Forrest and myself.

Alice and Lisa explained their reasoning behind raising the petition which had attracted in

excess of 3400 signatures. In essence the petition had been organised out of sheer frustration of the continued wait to see trains returning to a Station at Reston, with no public transport access to the Edinburgh jobs market and tertiary education for our younger

*(continued on p2)*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. Meeting With The Scottish Transport Minister
2. **RAGES** Annual General Meeting 2018
3. **RAGES** Attends East Lothian & Borders Gala Days
4. **TransportFocus** NRPS Report 2018
5. Cross Country Rail Franchise Consultation
6. Dunbar Station Passenger Counts
7. VTEC Becomes LNER
8. North Berwick Line Overcrowding
9. Local Rail Development Fund

## Meeting With The ScotRail Alliance & Network Rail (concluded from p1)

generation. On top of this there was a lacking in confidence of developers in the Eastern Berwickshire area and no transport links for day tourists and those taking holidays in this beautiful area of Scotland. It was also pointed out that residents that had moved to this area on the premise of Reston Station opening, had moved away again due to the extended time lapsed to date with no Station or train service.

Paul Wheelhouse had Keith Brown's letter which showed East Linton and Reston Stations opening in December 2016 and the fact that there was total cross party support for these Stations.

**RAGES** pointed out that Berwickshire is in the lowest average earnings area of Scotland, have no rail services and consequently residents have to provide their own transport. On top of this we have some of the highest fuel prices where non supermarket filling station prices are some 8 pence per litre higher than in Edinburgh. Many young people are being denied tertiary education due these basic factors, whilst others move out, never to return. The lack of services to Dunbar was also raised, as this town had seen a massive influx of new residents, and with a further 1500 new houses planned, there was not enough trains to satisfy the numbers commuting to Edinburgh and beyond. The Minister was presented with the passenger count that had been undertaken by the **RAGES** Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> May which clearly showed the

requirement for more trains.

The Transport Minister did acknowledge and have sympathy to the points put to him. He stated that he was also very keen to see our Stations re-opened to allow a passenger service to return to Berwickshire. The Minister would not be drawn on a date for the Stations re-opening but reiterated that it would be in the early part of Control Period 6. Again, the Minister was pressed for a date due to our basic requirements for proper public transport. It was at this point he instructed Transport Scotland to ensure that the Stations were to be constructed in parallel to the upgrade of Portobello Junction. This was acknowledged as a positive move as **RAGES** views Portobello Junction to be a major problem area for Network Rail and Train Operating Companies. In other words this problem area would be addressed first in four major investment areas in CP6, now the Stations are to be constructed in parallel – not afterwards.

The meeting concluded with the Transport Minister stating that he will write to **RAGES** giving an update on the development work resulting from the Capacity Study between Edinburgh and Berwick. Paul Wheelhouse MSP stated that on conclusion of the Study, plans for East Linton and Reston Stations are to be released for the public to see that our Rail Passenger needs are being taken very seriously. **RAGES** stated that the Station at Reston would have the effect of a

'Blood Transfusion' to Berwickshire.

It was great to have Alice and Lisa at the meeting to enable the Minister and Transport Scotland representatives to hear the case for Reston from a younger perspective, by using the power of Facebook to engage more people in our cause.

## POST-MEETING UPDATE

On Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2018, the Scottish First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, announced a reshuffle of the Scottish Government. A direct result of this was that Humza Yousaf has been replaced by Michael Matheson as Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.

On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018, **RAGES** Chairman Tom Thorburn e-mailed the new Minister to request confirmation that he would honour the commitment made by his predecessor, and would visit East Lothian to meet with **RAGES** at the earliest opportunity.

At the time of writing this, Tom has received a reply from the new Minister with an expression of intention to do so, but no date has yet been arranged for such a meeting to take place.

**The 2018 RAGES Annual General Meeting will be held on**

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September**

**at**

**Reston Village Hall, 7 for 7.30pm**

**RAGES members & members of the public are encouraged to attend.**

**Special Guest Speakers:**

**Jonathan Pugh, Strategy & Planning Director (Scotland) – Network Rail**

**Gordon Macleod, Rail Standards & Sustainability Manager – Transport Scotland**

# RAGES Attends East Lothian & Borders Gala Days

## EAST LINTON GALA

**RAGES** members Barrie Forrest and Harald Vox attended the **RAGES** stand at the East Linton Gala on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June. As can be seen in the photograph (right), the event was well-attended, and a good deal of interest was shown by those present on the plans for, and progress towards, the re-opening of a station in East Linton, and accompanying regular rail service.

## COLDINGHAM GALA

**RAGES** members Barrie Forrest and Ian Bowman attended the **RAGES** stand at the 41<sup>st</sup> Coldingham Gala on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July. They were assisted by David Jones. The photograph shows one of around 60 new **RAGES** members who signed up at the four galas.

*(right top: **RAGES** stand at East Linton Gala. Photograph: B. Forrest)*

*(right centre upper: **RAGES** stand at Reston Gala. Photograph: G. Moulding)*

*(right centre lower: A selection of artwork produced by Reston schoolchildren. Photograph: B. Forrest)*

*(right bottom: **RAGES** stand at Coldingham Gala. Photograph: B. Forrest)*



## RESTON GALA

Reston Gala was held on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June, and **RAGES** members Barrie Forrest, Allison Cosgrove and Glenn Moulding attended with a stand to distribute literature and information about **RAGES** objectives. The Reston area has been strongly supportive of the plan to re-open Reston station and provide regular rail services, and this was clearly demonstrated at the Gala, which was well-attended and our stand attracted much interest. Note the Reston station sign in the accompanying photograph (left)!

As further indication of the local interest, pupils of Reston Primary School produced artworks on the theme of 'Bring Back Reston Station'

Examples of their work are shown in the photograph (lower left). A copy of these has been sent by **RAGES** to the Transport Minister to show the strength of local feeling about the restoration of rail facilities.

## ST. ABBS GALA

**RAGES** members Barrie Forrest and Tom Thorburn attended the **RAGES** stand at the St. Abbs Lifeboat Gala & Fun Day at the Ebba Centre, St. Abbs on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July.

As with the other Gala days, there was much interest shown in **RAGES** aims, and several new members joined.

# TransportFocus NRPS Report 2018

## NATIONAL RAIL PASSENGER SURVEY 2018

**TransportFocus** is an independent statutory body which represents all rail users in England, Scotland and Wales, and other transport users in certain parts of the UK, including rail, bus, coach, all motorway and certain A-roads, and cyclists.

It originated in the 1947 Transport Act as the Central Transport Consultative Committee (CTCC) together with various Regional Transport User Consultative Committees (TUCCs).

Over the intervening time, it has undergone various changes in 1993, 2000, 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2014. Each such reorganisation involved change of name and expansion of its responsibilities.

Amongst its activities, **TransportFocus** carries out research and produces publications. One of these is the

National Rail Passenger Survey, which is a detailed survey of 50,000 rail passengers opinions about a range of 30 rail travel issues.

The survey is nationwide, but its findings are presented broadly regionally and by route, being specific to each of the Train Operating Companies (TOCs).

It is a very comprehensive survey of public attitudes to rail travel, covering such aspects as punctuality, reliability, crowding, seating, luggage space, value-for-money, cleanliness, frequency of service, station facilities, car parking, bus connections etc.

The 2018 NRPS results were published in June, and can be viewed online at the **TransportFocus** website:-

<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/>

under 'Publications'

In terms of its specific relevance to **RAGES** area, there are 3 TOCs of relevance, viz. **VTEC/LNER**, **CrossCountry** and **ScotRail**.

The first main section summarises key

findings since the last survey in 2017. Broadly, this shows that customer satisfaction has declined in almost all categories across all TOCs. In particular, in the category 'Overall Satisfaction', TOCs received ratings of between 69-95%, and **ScotRail** were noted to have 'significantly declined'.

As an example of the decline, both **ScotRail** and **CrossCountry** registered a decline of 15% since 2017 in the category 'How well train company deals with delays'. **ScotRail** also recorded declines of 7% in 'Punctuality/Reliability' and 'Value for Money', and 6% in 'Overall Satisfaction', whilst **CrossCountry** recorded declines of 5% in 'Value for Money' and 'Crowding', together with 3% in 'Punctuality/Reliability'. **VTEC/LNER** recorded a decline of 8% in 'Punctuality/Reliability'.

In addition to the NRPS Survey, the **TransportFocus** website contains a variety of other information which is of interest to rail travellers, and is well worth visiting.

## CrossCountry Rail Franchise Consultation

### CROSS COUNTRY PASSENGER RAIL FRANCHISE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Department for Transport (DfT) have published a Proposal regarding the franchise currently operated by CrossCountry Trains. The Proposal was launched on 7<sup>th</sup> June, and responses to it from

stakeholders have to be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> August. The Proposal can be viewed here:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cross-country-rail-franchise>

Among the specific highly contentious suggestions covered by the Proposal is that CrossCountry cease to serve smaller stations. This would certainly have a major impact on services at Dunbar, where most services are

currently provided by CrossCountry.

Our colleagues in **SENUG** (South-East Northumberland Rail Users Group) have prepared a detailed 15-page response to the DfT Proposal, and **RAGES** is in the process of preparing its own response.

Meanwhile, any members of the public who wish to read and respond to the DfT Proposal individually are urged to do so.

# Dunbar Station Passenger Counts

## DUNBAR STATION PASSENGER COUNTS 21<sup>st</sup> MAY 2018

On Monday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2018, the first full working day following the start of the new timetables, **RAGES** members carried out passenger counts for all passengers both boarding and alighting from all services stopping at Dunbar station that day.

A total of 32 services were surveyed, operated by Train Operating Companies (TOCs) VTEC/LNER, CrossCountry and ScotRail (the terminating services of the latter counting as 2 services each).

A summary of the results of the survey are given below:-

### VTEC/LNER

Services: 8

Total Passengers Boarding: 343

Total Passengers Alighting: 177

### CrossCountry

Services: 15

Total Passengers Boarding: 357

Total Passengers Alighting: 229

### ScotRail

Services: 9

Total Passengers Boarding: 72

Total Passengers Alighting: 138

This gives totals of 772 passengers boarding and 544 passengers alighting during the day, and a grand total of 1316 boardings/alightings. Extrapolating to obtain an annual figure, and

allowing for slightly less passengers at weekends, this gives a figure approaching half a million boardings/alightings annually.

The survey was not able to identify what proportions of the figures represented people living in Dunbar and those travelling from further afield.

**RAGES** would like to thank Dunbar station staff for their help and co-operation in this exercise. It is worth noting that they expressed the opinion that Mondays are not, in fact, the busiest day of the week (their opinion being that this is probably Tuesdays). In addition, it is also worth noting that the day of the survey was a Bank Holiday, though it is not known whether this skewed the figures obtained to any extent.

# VTEC Becomes LNER

## VTEC BECOMES LNER

On 24<sup>th</sup> June, the Government withdrew the East Coast franchise from **Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC)** and took control as Operator of Last Resort. The new service will be known as **London North-East Trains (LNER)**.

In an e-mail to **RAGES**, David Horne, Managing Director of Virgin Trains East Coast, said that "... we of course regret that our plans and ambitions for the East Coast franchise have not proceeded as we originally envisaged. "I wanted to take this opportunity to echo the Secretary of State's

reassurances that the changes to the will not impact on the day-to-day operation of train services and ticketing, and customers can continue their travel plans with complete confidence."

**RAGES** are not currently aware of any significant problems with the transition, which appears to have gone fairly smoothly.

# North Berwick Line Overcrowding

## NORTH BERWICK LINE OVERCROWDING

During May, **RAGES** contacted East Lothian Courier to highlight the

serious overcrowding which was being experienced on the North Berwick line. **RAGES** member Allison Cosgrove supplied a photograph of the 07.55, showing

numerous standing passengers on leaving Wallyford, where the guard had trouble closing the doors. Furthermore, at the following

*(continued on p7)*

## North Berwick Line Overcrowding

(concluded from p6)

station, Musselburgh, many passengers had been unable to

board the train and were forced to make alternative arrangements.

These problems have been caused by the late rollout of the new

Hitachi Class 385 trains, causing the 6-car sets previously used on the line to be replaced by 4-car sets due to shortage of rolling stock.

# Local Rail Development Fund

## LOCAL RAIL DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Scottish Government opened a new Local Rail Development Fund in April to support the objective appraisal of community-led proposals aimed at tackling very specific, local rail connectivity issues.

East Lothian Council has submitted an application to the Fund to take a fresh look at options for improving rail connections in the county, particularly for Haddington and Tranent. As **RAGES** members will likely be aware, in the last 20 years East Lothian Council has twice investigated the re-opening of the Haddington branch line, and concluded that the costs outweighed the benefits. However, the changing landscape of significant increases in population resulting in growing congestion on both road and rail networks, the proposed four-tracking of the line near Prestonpans, and the environmental need for to decrease emissions from transport, means that it is timely to re-evaluate how the future population of East Lothian accesses employment and amenities.

The study will consider all

options for connecting East Lothian, including:

- improving active travel links to rail stations;
- measures to reduce bus journey times to Edinburgh and beyond;
- provision of a tram/guided bus to Newcraighall using the proposed Sustainable Active Travel Corridor (A199/former A1 trunk road);
- provision of a new station at Blindwells and how this can serve a wider population;
- reinstatement of the branch line to Haddington with additional local train services;

The study will investigate current trip generators and future commuting trends as well as proposing potential solutions.

It is likely that central Government support will be sought for any further development, and therefore the transport appraisal will be carried out in line with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG). This process is impartial and objective-led rather than being solution-led which means that STAG provides a robust and consistent evidence base for decision-makers. The four sequential stages are:

- Initial Appraisal: Case for Change

- Preliminary Options Appraisal

- Detailed Options Appraisal (including proposals for monitoring and evaluation)

- Post Appraisal

At each stage of this process there will be a decision point (with the exception of post appraisal) to consider whether there is sufficient evidence to proceed with the appraisal. Accordingly, funding from the Local Rail Development Fund is provided in stages and it will only be possible to proceed to the next stage of appraisal when it can be demonstrated that there is sufficient justification to progress and commit further resources to the Preliminary Options Appraisal and Detailed Options Appraisal stages.

East Lothian Council's Local Rail Development Fund application is to support the Initial Appraisal stage, in the first instance, and they expect to hear whether they have been successful in attracting this funding by the autumn.

### **STOP PRESS:**

**As this issue was going to press, it has been confirmed that ELC have been awarded funding by TransportScotland for the Haddington/Tranent study.**

**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 1<sup>st</sup> April each year.

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

Tom Dickson  
 Membership Secretary (RAGES)  
 44 Kirk Park  
 Dunbar  
 EH42 1BJ

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

Title ..... Surname ..... Forename(s) .....

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