

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

Issue No. 2 - July 1999

East Linton Open Meeting

At the East Linton Open Meeting held on 28 May 1999, there were approximately 50 people present.

Our chairman, Tom Thorburn, welcomed the audience and introduced the guests:

- Bill Ure, Secretary Rail Users Consultative Council Scotland
- John Yellowlees, ScotRail External Relations Manager also representing Railtrack
- David Hansen, Secretary, Railway Development Society, Scotland
- Paul Ince, East Lothian Council Public Transport
- Colin Stewart, Dunpendeer Community Council

Apologies were given on behalf of John Home Robertson MSP and Nigel Wunsch of Railtrack.

As a former railway manager in Dunbar Bill Ure welcomed the RAGES strategy as both sensible and coherent spread over future years. In the short-term he felt the improvements at Dunbar would benefit East Linton, whilst in the medium-term the re-opening of the station would be immensely beneficial locally. In the longer term the RAGES focus on improvements as far as Berwick was also commendable.

The current government's policy is enthusiastic about re-opening stations, getting more cars off the road and generally improving the environment. A new window of opportunity is opening as the East Coast Main Line is being refurbished through Railtrack and the latter should be pressed to enhance capacity to allow for improvements to the service to Dunbar and East Linton. Social Inclusion is now the theme (i.e. inclusive of countryside) but the

downside of this was the necessity of having somebody to put the case. He encouraged us to build up strong connections with the local authority and convince it that we do need a train service; the costs of station reconstruction have to be justified.

The RUCC is very willing to help and he personally would welcome a new train service.

Paul Ince had only been involved a short time in the East Lothian rail study but he would be pleased to relay comments and queries to the right quarters. When the report was published in the summer, it would be made widely available.

John Yellowlees felt that RAGES had got off to a good start with an excellent response from GNER following the Dunbar meeting. He went on to describe the improvements on the North Berwick service including the reduction in cheap day return fares which resulted in a 70% increase in sales and CCTV at Musselburgh and

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Members' Meeting

Your committee has decided to organise a members' night so that we can get to know each other better.

This has been arranged for Wednesday 6 October 1999 at 19:30 hrs in the Dunbar Bowling Club, Station Road, Dunbar and will take the form of a buffet price £2.00 with drinks payable at the Club Bar.

Further details will be published, but as entry will be by ticket, please contact Ian Bowman on 01368 863145 to order yours now.

Membership

We now have almost 80 members from around the counties.

Please encourage your neighbours or fellow passengers to join RAGES.

Membership forms can be obtained from committee members, whose names can be found on your membership card.

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

Inside Issue 2:

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- Railway Development Society concerns requiring support - See Insert

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

Members are also invited to send their own RAGES-related issues to the Secretary which will be passed on to the relevant authority.

Stop Press

RAGES has started discussions with ScotRail to provide a service initially from Edinburgh to Dunbar.

East Linton Open Meeting

From Page 1

Wallyford. With regard to the re-opening of East Linton station, which would cost around £1.5m, the main issues were line capacity, train capacity and funding support. It should be remembered that, on the East Coast Main Line, GNER were considering the introduction of two trains per hour, Virgin was wanting an hourly service, English, Welsh and Scottish were running more freight trains and there was the Edinburgh Cross Rail Project.

He emphasised the importance of the Rail Study and looked forward to its analysis of the capacity issues.

David Hansen gave his ideas on the background to station re-opening. He reminded us that previous governments used to think that cars were the only method of transport, but bear in mind that 38% of Scottish households don't have a car. Now government is encouraging all modes - train, bus, bike... Trains are definitely on the up! On the issue of buses replacing trains, he pointed out that bus journeys take longer than train journeys and are generally less comfortable with less luggage space. On relative costs of road and rail he admitted that a train service between Dunbar and Edinburgh, calling at East Linton, is not necessarily commercially viable, but then some roads do not bear strict cost-benefit analysis. The Railway Development Society believes that a rail station can be of real benefit to a village community providing a possible focus for shops and local transport.

Public Question Time

Tom now invited comments from the audience. The following are some of the points raised.

Q. Some GNER trains are half empty at Dunbar.

A. But fuller elsewhere! However GNER would not stop at East Linton. They are a long distance carrier.

Q. What is ScotRail's view on East Linton re-opening?

A. Many stations have been re-opened over the last several years but the franchise runs out in 2004. There are no local trains to Dunbar since any available stock was transferred to the North Berwick service in 1990.

Q. Could composite trains run to Drem and separate portions then proceed to North Berwick and Dunbar, with appropriate reverse operation?

A. Can be done but must be slick operation. There must be no delays because of intensity of main line traffic. It was not thought to be the way forward.

Q. Could a Waverley to East Linton and Dunbar service be run hourly?

A. Yes - no point in having half measures.

Q. On the NB service off-peak trains are lightly loaded. Is this justifiable?

A. Shorter train sets are envisaged next year. This problem is being reviewed in the Rail Study.

Q. Will the new service be running within 5 years?

A. It is necessary to keep up the public pressure on the relevant bodies for the re-opening. It may take years or it could be quick! In some places local government re-

organisation allied to rail privatisation slowed things up but that shouldn't apply here.

Q. There is ambivalence within the local community about the re-opening since it could attract more building development, i.e. there is a price to be paid for a new station.

A. Not necessarily. Any proposals would have to go through the East Linton council - future planning needs are already known and published. Also it should be noted that there is not necessarily a direct correlation between size of community and the existence of a station (cf Drem!)

Q. What are the terms of reference of the Rail Study?

A. It only covers the rail system in East Lothian, but not Berwickshire. The study seeks to 'get the best usage out of the network'.

Q. Can bus and train connections be set up?

Q. How can people get to a station without a car?

Q. How about a free bus service from East Linton to either Drem, North Berwick or Dunbar?

A. Doubtful! There is already a 2 hourly bus service.

Q. Do developers have access to the Rail Study?

A. No, but developers can contribute to station costs.

Q. Where would the new station be? What about access and a car park?

A. It would be unstaffed, have full-length platforms, full access (including wheelchairs) and generally have to satisfy the Rail Regulators conditions. Also, if a station is recommended then the Council would have to release the land as required.

Q. Who uses Drem?

A. Focus for car owners coming in from a wide area.

Q. Can Dunbar passengers, who use GNER, be persuaded to use ScotRail trains?

Q. What can RAGES do?

A. Need to attract more support from East Linton people. RAGES shall continue to speak to our MSP, local councillors and the media.

When the audience was asked for a show of hands as to whether they would want the station to be re-instated, there was a unanimous response.

Thanks on behalf of RAGES

Peter de Iongh, Chairman of Dunpender Community Council, thanked RAGES for setting up the meeting, after which Tom thanked people for coming and said that RAGES would keep things moving.

Travel Survey

Around 8% response was obtained from our travel questionnaire. These have been forwarded to MVA for evaluation and the results will be published in the next Rages Rag. Thanks to all who responded.

Progress at Dunbar

New train services

The new morning service was supposed to start on Monday 30 May at 08:54 hrs and your intrepid Chairman and Editor were there complete with cameras.

Unfortunately fate struck in the form of a unit failure at Alnmouth and 10 or so would-be passengers and a bicycle (owned by a RAGES member) were promptly transferred to a coach and dispatched at the advertised time up the A1.

Next day we were back and witnessed the 08:54 being boarded by around 20 passengers. The photograph shows the 225 having just arrived at Dunbar.



Letter from Bob Bone, GNER

In his response on 20 May to our Dunbar meeting of 19 March, Bob Bone makes the following comments:

Fare evasion: “A number of actions have now been introduced to help solve this issue. We will, of course, continue to monitor the situation.” He thanks us for our contributions to this issue.

More trains: “I have nothing further to add except to remind you that GNER are providing more services than we require to do under the PSR.” He has “fed back to our marketing colleagues the issue of shoppers returning at approximately 1600”.

Station refurbishment: “.. vast improvement to the roadway giving an additional 22 car park spaces also the

new resurfaced platform”. He also comments that “there is provision to introduce a new waiting area at the Edinburgh end of the platform.” The ticket office should soon be complete and the main contracting work complete within 2 weeks. “The investment ... is a real commitment by GNER to the community of Dunbar. I would welcome comments once the work is complete.”

Ticket Office opening times: GNER are reviewing the issue.

Station Access from the west: he asks for numbers of people who would benefit and a map outlining the route.

Bus/train integration: “We will pursue with the local bus company how this could be achieved. GNER are committed to integration in road and rail transport at all our stations.”

Our reply to Bob Bone

We have responded to Bob Bone’s letter thanking him for the progress so far.

It is pointed out that at the time of writing (1 June) the refurbishment work was still in progress.

The following points were raised which had not been replied to:

- Shelter at west end of platform
- Cycle rack/lockers
- Ticket machines
- Availability of Apex/super saver tickets from Dunbar
- Publicity of new services

To help GNER(!), RAGES has produced suitable posters which have been distributed around Dunbar, Innerwick, Cocksburnpath and Stenton.

Current situation at Dunbar

The waiting room has been extended. It has been tastefully decorated and carpeted with new seating added. There is now a disabled toilet to complement the existing refurbished toilet. Another welcome addition is a vending area with machines for hot/cold drinks and snacks. A new entrance veranda is now in place and the station externally decorated - thank you GNER.

Timetable error

It has been pointed out that the new 18:30 hrs service from Edinburgh, shown on page 4 of the last Rages Rag, only goes as far as Newcastle and not to King’s Cross as stated. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

North Berwick News

New trains

Although it was not advertised beforehand, our vice chairman, James King, was on hand to photograph class 318 trials to North Berwick.

The front unit is in SPT's new colours, while the rear unit is orange.



Campaign for Borders Rail

RAGES maintains links with other transport action groups and we are pleased to publish the following contribution from Bill Jamieson, CBR's Membership Secretary. Membership of CBR costs £2.50 a year and Bill can be contacted at Sparrow Castle, 91 Galashiels Road, Stow, TD1 2RQ.

"Incredibly, almost nine months have already passed since the idea of a rail campaigning group for the Borders was first floated. In that time we've held a Burns Supper, produced two newsletters, organised a petition and recruited 200 members from all over the Borders, in fact all over the UK. Over the summer we will be attending a number of local events to try and boost our membership, besides running some fund raising events, but our big event will be a conference in October. This is now firming up and Tweed Horizons near Newtown St.Boswells is already booked for

the 14th of the month. The conference will be aimed primarily at politicians and other opinion formers and we hope they will be left in no doubt why the return of rail is vital for the future well being of the Borders.

The idea for the campaign was partly prompted because economic gloom had plumbed new depths at the time, but the then approaching 30th anniversary of the Waverley Line closure also gave it impetus. Despite the latter factor raising much interest, we decided that the campaign should be for rail anywhere within the Borders, hence our name. As it turned out, the announcement of the Scottish Office Waverley Line study has dictated that we concentrate our efforts there for the immediate future, to ensure that the maximum popular pressure for reopening is applied. We therefore welcome the appearance of RAGES on the scene to give the attention which reopening of Reston Station deserves. We look forward to working with RAGES in the future and see our two organisations as being very much complementary in South East Scotland, albeit with an area of common interest."

Letter to the Editor

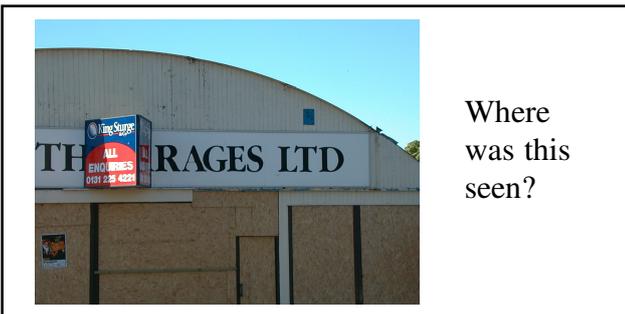
Dear Sir,

The introduction of the new GNER summer timetable and the extra 08:54 Dunbar to Glasgow and 17:30 Glasgow to Dunbar (Newcastle) happily coincided with the introduction of my own personal summer timetable. Contrary to popular belief university lecturers don't get long summer holidays as this time is our opportunity to bash on with research. Honest! So for the next couple of months I have the opportunity to travel on these two new services rather than my normal regime of 07:47 to Glasgow

returning on the 18:00 from Glasgow. This has the added bonus of giving me more time to spend with the kids in the morning and evening although I have sneaking suspicion that my wife now has to cope with chivying along two males where it used to be only our son who was in need of her gentle 'reminders' at 08:30!

So far the service has been pretty reliable. Only one train to Glasgow I've gone for has suffered any noticeable delay and none of the return journeys have given any cause for complaint [caveat: I've not used these services every day.] Usually a couple of dozen passengers - customers! - travel into Edinburgh on the 08:54 and about twice that number return on the 18:30. Above all I appreciate the 17:30 (Glasgow) return service as it's less heavily booked than the 18:00 and even when it departs Edinburgh at 18:30 there's not the usual chaos associated with the 19:00. So, all in all I'm very happy with these new services. Thanks to GNER and RAGES! Now if GNER could make these a permanent feature of their timetable...

Duncan Smeed, Chairman, Dunbar's John Muir Association
(written on the 17:30 17/6/99)



Where was this seen?