

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

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RAGES Second Annual General Meeting

The meeting commenced with the Chairman, Tom Thorburn, presiding. He welcomed those present, especially the guest speaker David Hansen from Inverkeithing of the Rail Development Society, now known as Rail Futures.

The Minutes of the 1st Annual General Meeting were agreed to be a true record.

Résumé of the Group's first year

The Chairman said that it had been a "good year", despite the East Coast Main Line (ECML) accidents at Hatfield and Great Heck and that GNER had provided Dunbar with a reasonable service in the circumstances. Platform monitors were to be installed there in 3-4 weeks.

James King, Vice Chairman, speaking about the North Berwick service, said that since privatisation of the railways, passenger traffic had increased by 30%, which had taken everyone by surprise. Because railways were thought to be on their way out, railway companies had not invested sufficiently in new trains. There had been an expansion of the North Berwick service and improvements thanks to RAGES, but the new units were still awaited. In addition, track in the Dirleton area was to be re-laid in September with continuous welded rail. The meeting at Longniddry had been very successful, with approximately 180 in attendance. Alastair McPherson had been both "practical and honest" in his presentation. More parking space and CCTV were still required.

In respect of Reston, the Chairman said that its re-opening now featured in both the Scottish Borders Structure Plan and Scottish Executive's Scottish Rail Priorities. Drew Tulley, Convenor of Scottish Borders Council, had been lobbied and said that he would instruct Transport Officer Peter Fuller to make contact.

There was a successful public meeting in East Linton attended by 85 people, from which a lot of support had emerged. A draft letter to be sent to MPs and MSPs

had been circulated.

As for Haddington, there would be a meeting with its Community Council next month.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman and Vice Chairman had written the RAGES' response for the Scottish Executive's document "Strategic Priorities for Scotland's Passenger Railway". The Vice Chairman pointed out that there was a unity of purpose of local authorities along the route of the West Coast Main Line (WCML) and that RAGES should work to get something similar for ECML authorities, because the Rail Passengers Committee advocated local services on both east and west coast routes.

The Chairman concluded by thanking Coldingham Community Council for making a submission to the Strategic Rail Priorities along similar lines to RAGES' views. He also thanked the Committee members for work done during the year, which he had "thoroughly enjoyed" as chairman.

Secretary's Report

The Secretary said there had been ten committee meetings together with well attended public meetings in Longniddry and East Linton and meetings with Capital Rail Action Group in Edinburgh and Stenton Community Council.

He had been successful in getting money from the National Lottery "Awards For All" scheme which provided money for the hire of halls, speakers expenses and the display boards.

He said that he was standing down because he was moving out of the area, but was proud of what RAGES had achieved in improving the local services. He thanked the Committee and wished it well. He looked forward to being invited back for the re-opening ceremonies of East Linton and Reston stations. It was

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Railtrack in Scotland - What Now?

The demise of Railtrack, although not totally unexpected, took us by surprise and has left us asking whether vertical integration of the system between the train operating companies and railway infrastructure should be introduced.

Upon privatisation, there was no return to the pre-nationalisation days of the "Big Four", or the plethora of companies which existed before the "Grouping" of 1923. The model used traffic separated from infrastructure along similar lines to road transport. For whatever reasons, it is not a system that has worked and so vertical integration is again on the agenda.

For Scotland, it is suggested that ScotRail could take over the track. However, GNER and Virgin might want responsibility for the Anglo-Scottish routes. There are also the freight companies to consider. These other companies would possibly pay an access charge to ScotRail for their Anglo-Scottish Services.

Whichever, and it does make sense to combine traffic with infrastructure, it must be done on a sound financial basis with a long-term franchise for stability and future investment.

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.

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appropriate that the guest speaker was David Hansen, because he had introduced him to the Chairman, leading to the founding of RAGES.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for all his work.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer spoke to the terms of a written report, which he had circulated. He also thanked Chris McArthur for auditing the books.

Membership Report

The Membership Secretary advised that there were 176 new members since the previous AGM, although 89 had failed to renew their membership. Most of these were from North Berwick, by which he deduced that they perhaps thought that as the work on their local service was complete, membership was no longer necessary. Membership was currently 217.

There had been 5 editions of *The Rages Rag* since the last

AGM, but he could no longer print this for free. The website was more up to date and he had recently received an e-mail from Australia from potential tourists who wanted to use East Linton station next year!

Election of Office Bearers

The existing members were re-elected, with the Secretary's post now being undertaken by Roy Mitchell and Glenn Moulding becoming the Dunbar Representative.

The Chairman thanked Moira Porter for her work for Dunbar and also thanked John Denning.

The Vice Chairman pointed out that committee meetings were open for anyone to attend and all would be welcome.

Guest Speaker

The Chairman introduced the guest speaker, whose talk is reported below.

Summary of David Hansen's AGM Talk

David Hansen represented Rail Future, formerly the Railway Development Society. He said that a year ago things were looking positive and upbeat for railways, but it had changed a bit because of the East Coast Main Line accidents. In the past, party politicians had thought that there was lots of money available in the private sector for investment. As the Managing Director of his own computer firm, he knew that this was not the case.

The Skye Bridge project will cost £25m at the end of the day, but only £500,000 of this actually came from the private sector.

Meanwhile, Railtrack has announced that it only has money for investment in the West Coast Main Line and has pulled out of the Larkhall project.

The SRA will solve all problems? It has money, but little of this is scheduled to be spent in Scotland. There is no Barnett formula for Scotland's railways.

Franchise terms had been changed. No twenty-year extensions are to be granted and therefore no stability for the franchisee companies. As a consequence, improvements for Dunbar and East Linton were in doubt. These had been included at the request of the Scottish Executive. The Scottish Executive had saved the Larkhall project, but there was a limit to what it could do. It had given no commitment to Borders Rail, but a new study had been commissioned. There was also to be a study on the Edinburgh-Leith tram, indeed, all sorts of consultation exercises.

"Corridor Studies" are made to examine routes and evaluate road, rail, or whatever mode is to receive investment. It is always the road that gets the money though – A1, M8, etc.

Public Transport campaigners need to identify their enemies. Henry McLeish, for example, lives in St. Andrews, but drives to and from Edinburgh every day. He does not use the rail service from Leuchars.

Party politicians always tell you what you want to hear, not what you need to know. For example, no politician will say that Borders Rail is a bad idea, but no-one will come up with any money for it.

In respect of new transport projects and the Scottish Executive, there are none for rail, while there are lots of major road projects - £400m worth. Meanwhile there is much talk of integration and co-ordination, but little apparent action. In Karlsruhe in Germany, implementation took time and did not happen overnight.

He referred to the success of electrification between Leeds and Skipton, which is part of the Settle and Carlisle line. "Sleek and attractive" trains now operate which are well patronised. Why not such a service to Dunbar?

East Lothian is not the centre of Edinburgh and has no "Greenways". There is a need for integration of transport. It is possible to do a show-piece system in a quasi-rural area. Karlsruhe in Germany and rural Sweden are cases in point. Bus timetables in Sweden are written on enamel signs, which indicate their permanence, while here they are constantly changing.

He referred to the new station at Dalgety Bay, which cost £1.5m. It was not attractive, consisting of two bus shelters and a car park. The original concept which included kindergarten, toilets and a shop had failed to materialise.

He had no "pat answer" on how to make things happen, but thought that using community councils was important and using politicians, especially the list MSPs, who have nothing to do other than spend their time looking for jobs and causes. RAGES should use these people to get information. There was the possibility of EU money for projects. There is an EU office in Edinburgh for information. There are various pro-rail organisations similar to his own. We should use them for contacts. He also said that the Rail Passenger Users Council was "second to none" with regard to providing help and assistance. At the end of the day, though, there was "no easy answer".

Mr Hansen then answered a series of questions dealing with campaigning, rail operators and the pricing systems, the road orientation of the Government, Scottish Executive priorities, the role of Railtrack and Friends of the Earth "briefing packs".

Haddington Open Meeting

The last issue of *The Rages Rag* led with “Haddington a possibility for £9m”.

Following this, at the end of September, RAGES was invited to attend a meeting of the Haddington and District Community Council to discuss this possibility, which would allow trains once more to run from East Lothian’s county town to Edinburgh.

The meeting consisted of a slide presentation describing

RAGES’ aims, its progress to date and our case for the re-opening.

This was well received by the Council and it was agreed to hold an open meeting such that we can gauge the public response to and support for such a project.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday 7th November 2001 at the Corn Exchange in Court Street, Haddington, starting at 19:30 hrs. All are welcome.

Reston News - Barrie Forrest

Campaigning on behalf of Reston station has taken place with Berwickshire Community Council Forum, who are supportive, and twice with the Scottish Borders Council Berwickshire Area Committee.

At the first Area Committee meeting it was asked what area Borders Rail Forum covered? Council Convenor Drew Tulley replied that it only covered the reinstatement of the Waverley Line and Reston is classed as an East Coast Line issue. However, he did say that the Council supports an Edinburgh to Berwick rail service.

The second Area Committee Meeting heard three questions from RAGES.

- It was asked why RAGES couldn’t attend the Borders Rail Forum meetings which the Council holds? Once again the answer was that the Council was only interested in the reinstatement of the Waverley Line.
- To determine if anything was requested for Reston, we asked if we could see the application to the Scottish Executive for public transport funding? In reply we were advised to write to the Director of Transport & Environmental Standards at

the Council headquarters.

- We appealed to the Council to be more involved with our group, in the same way that East Lothian Council is. We stated very strongly that there was no problem between ourselves and the Elected Council Members (Councillors), but there was with the employed Council Members. The Convenor said he would look in to this matter.

We will continue to press the Area Committee for their support for the reopening of Reston station and for our involvement in their meetings as Reston is an integral part of the Scottish Borders.

Further meetings have been arranged in November with Eyemouth Town Council and Eyemouth and Berwickshire Partnership.

It was noted that Reston had been omitted from the Scottish Executive’s document “Strategic Priorities for Scotland’s Passenger Railway”. Councillor John Elliot and the Chairman got in touch with the Scottish Executive and Sarah Boyack replied that this had indeed been an oversight. So it does pay to read these documents!

Dunbar News - Glenn Moulding

New Train Indicator Displays at Dunbar

A long-needed service finally became available at Dunbar station during October when the new train indicator displays came into service. These give on-platform details of the next train due and its expected arrival time.

Winter timetable

The new winter timetable came into operation at the end of September. The main welcome feature is the retention of the 23:00 southbound service from Edinburgh stopping at Dunbar.

Ongoing issues

A number of issues are currently being pursued. These include the acute car-parking problems at Dunbar and continuing evidence of fare evasion between Edinburgh and Dunbar, both of which have been highlighted in an exchange of letters between RAGES and GNER.

At the time of writing, it is planned to write to Eve Cars & Coaches Ltd. to suggest the possibility of extending the early morning North Berwick bus service 120 to start from the new ‘Poppyfields’ housing development in Dunbar, so as to provide a local bus link with the 07:47 service to Edinburgh.

Thanks

As a small space would have been left here, the Editor has used it to thank his contributors for their articles and the proof readers who avoid him leaving spelling mistakes for all to see!

Membership

We now have around 220 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.

RAGES acts after North Berwick Winter Timetable starts badly

By James King

The new timetable got off to a very bad start from Monday 1st October.

318256 "North Berwick Flyer" appeared on this first day of the new 06.50 North Berwick-Garscadden, but the conductor decided to prevent any bikes travelling. After a heated row, two bikes were let on, but others were turned away. Arrival of this first through train to Glasgow Central was delayed by 15 minutes at Argyll Street due to a failed track machine at Finneston.

On the same day the 08.41 North Berwick-Haymarket was cancelled due to the driver mis-reading his diagram and setting off from Motherwell on the inbound train 30 minutes late!

The next day was worse. No bikes were allowed on the 06.50 North Berwick-Garscadden. The 08.41 North Berwick-Haymarket was cancelled due to set failure. Passengers going for the 18.01 Haymarket-North Berwick were turned away by the train staff at Haymarket because they did not know the inbound train went on to North Berwick.

When on Wednesday morning all peak trains were cancelled due to a GNER set failure at Longniddry, the long-line information system was not very helpful. In the evening, passengers at Waverley for the 17.10 were shuffled to and fro between platforms 1 and 20 before it was eventually cancelled.

Thursday 4th October saw more late running and the worst contretemps about bikes to date. All were turned away by the guard on the 06.50, which arrived in Glasgow one hour late after sitting behind another failed ScotRail set.

As a result of the week's experiences, something had to be done quickly. RAGES arranged to meet Operations Manager Steve Montgomery at ScotRail's HQ that day to see what could be done about: bikes; late running and cancellations with consequent overcrowding issues; poor long-line information; lack of announcements at Haymarket.

Resulting from our meeting, at which Steve apologised profusely for the poor service, the following was agreed:

- The problem with bikes on the 318s was an industrial

relations issue affecting a small number of guards. To resolve it, ScotRail agreed to undertake a risk assessment (now completed) to define a new policy for bikes on North Berwick 318s, to which the guards would be held. At the time of writing, this is awaited.

- Late running/cancellations are caused by badly organised crew rosters and the fact that ScotRail does not yet have enough staff trained to operate 318s. Two results:
 - more 305s will be retained
 - the set held at Waverley until it comes into service at 08.40 will now be held as a crewed spare from the start of the morning services so that it can cover any problems that may occur early-on.
- Poor long line information would be addressed with the staff at Dunfermline.
- Announcers would be briefed at Haymarket regarding the new train times.

Steve Montgomery said that ScotRail really wanted to deliver an exemplary North Berwick service and would work to do so. He thanked RAGES for bringing the above to his attention.

The following morning the 06.50 ex-North Berwick ran to perfect timing with no bike problems but some trains later that day ran up to 15 minutes late. Services the following week were also subject to a high number of delays and cancellations but with all three old 305s in full service by the end of the week they then started to improve.

Musselburgh and Wallyford passengers have quickly become used to the new evening times but some working mothers have said that the 17.50 (in place of the old 17.37) gives them a problem collecting their children from child-minders before 18.00, after which it costs more.

RAGES is keeping a watching brief on services and will have no hesitation in again pressuring ScotRail if they do not improve.

East Lothian cycle lockers at local stations

Commuters who choose to cycle to their local train station will now be able to secure their bike in new cycle lockers. East Lothian Council has recently installed a number of cycle lockers at train stations in the area as part of the ongoing package of station improvements funded by the Scottish Executive's Public Transport Fund.

Cllr Charles Ingle, Vice Convener of Environment Committee said: "The lockers are available for use by train users who leave their bikes at the station during the day. It is

a great incentive to encourage commuters who want to cycle to their local station. They know that they can now secure their bike when they travel into town."

Keys for the lockers are available from the Council on payment of a returnable deposit of £15.

If you want to apply for a key, please phone 01620 827661 or write to the Head of Transportation, John Muir House, Haddington, EH41 3HA.

Electronic Rags

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