

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

www.rages.org.uk

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The Shape of Trains to Come

As has been reported here, the Strategic Rail Authority is insisting that the North Berwick branch service 322s go back south for the Greater Anglia franchise and there is a dearth of suitable overhead electric stock around to replace them.

The only acceptable alternative, from a very short list, has been class 90 locomotives and hauled stock.

From early April there will be four push-pull sets to work



the North Berwick branch service, each comprising a Class 90 locomotive, 4 ex-Virgin West Coast Mk III coaches and a DVT. The latter is a Driving Van Trailer in which the driver sits when the loco is in push mode and is the same as the GNER's East Coast Main Line 225 sets. This means that turnround facilities at North Berwick are not required. This setup was tested on December 21st for lineside clearance on the branch, as seen in the above photograph.

Three trial runs have been completed, all successfully, showing that the sets can keep to the timetable. These trains will run until suitable overhead electric multiple unit stock becomes available.

James King, RAGES ex-vice chairman and now a member of the Rail Passenger Committee for Scotland, said to RAGES: "From a situation 24 months ago when North Berwick service passengers had to travel on ancient slam door class 305s to the prospect of high quality locomotives and coaching stock it can truly be said that the fortunes of the service have gone from the ridiculous to the sublime".

Current operations

Having reported in October that the service was running

reasonably smoothly - and then reliability taking a turn for the worse after publication - it is surely tempting fate to advise that in recent weeks the service has remained generally reliable, save for the cancellation of early trains on Christmas Eve as a result of signalling difficulties.

The October problems were largely the result of train failures, but hopefully they will hold together until the replacements arrive in April.

Recently there have been a few problems. On January 23rd, due to late running, the 17:07 ex-Edinburgh terminated at Drem, but the driver was told after leaving the station. This resulted in his having to go back to the Edinburgh-bound platform. Passengers then had to traverse the bridge to get the next train, which was not easy for the lady with the pram.

Ticket Barriers

Work is proceeding on the construction of ticket barriers at Waverley and Haymarket stations and the introduction of automatic ticket purchase machines.

At Haymarket, entry to the platforms will be by passing through the barriers and having tickets electronically checked. Regular passengers will note that paper tickets are no longer issued by conductors but are now of a card material with a magnetic stripe at the back in the same style as issued at station booking offices. In order to create space, the newsagents and coffee kiosk have gone,

Photo: Ewan Tait

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

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The editor invites contributions which should be sent to him at the "Published by" address at the foot of page 6.

Rail Passengers Committee Meeting at Falkirk on 14 January 2004

Tom Thorburn, Barrie Forrest and Geoff Evison travelled to Falkirk to attend this meeting. Mike Lunan, Convenor of RPC Scotland, informed the assembly of the untimely death of Bill Ure's wife, Margaret, on Christmas Eve. Through our working with Bill, the committee have met Margaret on several occasions and we were very shocked to hear of her death. We would like to extend our sympathies to Bill and his family.

On a brighter note, Peter Cotton Managing Director of ScotRail gave a comprehensive address. First on his agenda was an interesting slide show on the performance of his company in comparison to the rest of the Train Operating Companies. It came as no surprise that ScotRail came out top on all but one of the performance indicators. But he is by no means complacent about ScotRail being in this position and will strive to raise standards further.

Another subject Peter touched on was the introduction of Ticket Barriers at Waverley, Haymarket and Queen Street Upper and Lower Levels. During question time, RPC committee member (and former Vice Chairman of RAGES) James King raised the very valid point with Peter that he would like to see the gates at platform 10/11 opened such that passengers disembarking from the GNER 08.08 service would be able to quickly negotiate to other platforms for their connections. Peter replied that he would take this issue back for discussion and would report back.

Peter then moved on to discuss the opening of Edinburgh Park, which already is meeting the projected level of patronage some 3 months down the line. Out of this came several questions namely: why are there no toilet facilities; why is it that only Dunblane/Bathgate trains call at Edinburgh Park; when peak services are served by a shortened train, i.e. 2 or 3 cars, there is no room for Edinburgh Park passengers with the result they are left on the platform for another 30 minutes – what is being done to address these? Peter answered by explaining: there is no unmanned station with a toilet in Scotland (I'm sure there must be one somewhere); ScotRail does not wish to stop

Edinburgh to Glasgow trains as this would extend the journey time of that service. Very interestingly, he stated that the effect that Edinburgh Park was having on train timetables would be cancelled out if the Her Majesty's Rail Inspectorate would allow the turning of services to take place at Newcraighall platform instead of going into the turn back siding – something which RAGES have been requesting for a long time; problems with Turbostar engines was about complete and therefore the shortened train problem should disappear.

Introduction of new rolling stock was then covered. Peter told us that eight new Turbostar sets had been delivered and are now in service on the Edinburgh and Glasgow route which means that Class 158s will become a rare sight. Moving to the North Berwick service, Peter thanked RAGES for their part in trying to get the 322 EMUs retained - as did he, but that we lost the battle and they would be returning to WAGN. Peter said at the time that he was 95% certain that the 322s would be replaced by four ex-Virgin mark 3's, a driver van trailer and electric loco (almost like the re-introduction of 'The Lothian Coast Express'), but as you will have read on page 1, this is now to happen.

During public question time I asked Peter how soon, if National Express retained the ScotRail franchise, would they implement their local service to Dunbar and Berwick. Peter responded that he was very much aware of this, but was not allowed to comment under the terms of the Bidding Process. This reply was expected, but it is always good to let all know that we are going to keep campaigning!

At the end of the meeting we had a chat with: Robert Samson, secretary of RPC who invited us to give a presentation to an RPC meeting at the Moat Hotel Glasgow on 28th February; Tim Armour, GNER Scotland Operations Manager who wished to meet with us in a hotel in Dunbar to discuss things and Peter Cotton who again thanked us for our positive input and assistance.

All in all, this was a worthwhile meeting for the Group.

Berwick News

Apart from one or two delays, train services to and from Berwick have once again performed reasonably well over the past three months. On 9th November, Sunday train services resumed after a break of six weeks during which buses replaced trains between Newcastle and Edinburgh owing to engineering work. As usual there were no services on Christmas day and Boxing day, however on New Year's day, GNER provided an extra service from Edinburgh to Berwick at 05.30.

Thursday 8 January saw a number of delays and cancellations when safety netting dangling from Electricity Board pylons at Aycliffe, near Darlington, closed the East Coast Main Line to electric trains for most of the day. This of course was no fault of either the train operators or Network Rail, but no doubt caused great inconvenience to those travelling on that day.

Saturday and Sunday 17 and 18 January saw the complete closure of Edinburgh Waverley station owing to the commissioning of new signalling at that location. This resulted in all northbound and southbound GNER trains terminating and starting at Berwick. As usual when engineering work necessitates the use of replacement bus services the situation was handled very well by the staff at Berwick, kindly assisted by a number of Virgin staff from Edinburgh and Leeds since their trains terminated and started at Newcastle.

The Way Forward?

By John W Denning

“The Government has announced a review of the country’s creaking railways in a bid to reduce delays and curb costs on a network marred by eight fatal train crashes since privatisation in 1996.”

It is said that railway privatisation was considered by Margaret Thatcher to be a “privatisation too far”. Whatever, what is certainly true is that when John Major succeeded as her, there remained little for him to privatise and accordingly the railways came into focus.

By then railways had reduced to a core function of carrying passengers and trainload freight i.e. coal. Ancillary activities such as ferries, hotels, laundries, parcels, cartage and most types of freight had already been privatised or discarded. Considerable sums were expended on consultants and merchant bankers and accordingly a privatisation plan that separated the ownership of the track & infrastructure, and rolling stock from the operation of the trains was produced. Meanwhile, maintenance was put out to tender, while the operating companies were franchised out and had to buy track access.

This model surprised everyone. Most expected a return to the “big four” of pre-nationalization days, but it was not to be. Initially all worked reasonably well and passengers numbers rose and John Prescott announced vast sums for investment and proposals to expand the rail network and re-open some closed lines,

Soon it all went pear-shaped following on from the Hatfield crash of October 2000. Railtrack took fright and tackled the work it had deferred and went into administration. All plans for expansion disappeared while the money pledged was used to maintain the existing network.

Calls have been made to re-nationalise the railways, while others advocate “vertical integration” of the existing structure, by linking into one company track, infrastructure and trains on a regional basis.

Despite condemning the system of privatisation as causing “fragmentation, excessive complication and dysfunctionality”, the Government has indicated its intention to still work within the existing framework, but also to try and improve it. In so doing it proposes more control and money for the Scottish Executive, which already has control over ScotRail service levels as franchise funders, but no control over Network Rail.

This should be good news for RAGES, because the Scottish Executive does have a commitment to expanding and improving rail services, whereas Network Rail recently announced cuts in maintenance, which will have a direct effect on service provision. Hopefully, this will mean that current rail services will be maintained, while at the same time it will be possible to develop the local service down the East Coast Main Line, initially to Dunbar and thereafter to Berwick-upon-Tweed.

An Appreciation of John Denning’s Input at RAGES

By Tom Thorburn

John phoned me on Monday 26th January to inform me that he would be leaving East Lothian Council and was heading for a new job in Brechin. RAGES has indeed lost a great advisor, helper and friend. John attended all our committee meetings religiously and was always available to give comment, but more importantly arrange meetings with the relevant politicians for us – none more so than the visit of Lewis Macdonald, Deputy Transport Minister to our AGM.

John has said he will remain a member and will always be available for advice.

On behalf of the committee, I would to take this opportunity to wish John all the best in his new job at Brechin (I will let the Caledonian Railway know that he is now free for work there) and thank him very much for all his input and kind words over the years.

Better Security and Information for ScotRail Stations

ScotRail recently awarded a contract for a programme of work to improve security and customer information across stations in the Lothians and Forth Valley.

The contract, for provision of new 24-hour on-line CCTV at 14 stations and the installation of Customer Information Systems (CIS) to keep passengers informed about destinations and time-keeping at 21 stations, has been let to Photo-Scan. The total value of the investment is approximately £2m, and completion is due in the summer of 2004.

Funded by the Scottish Executive, the programme will include the installation of 234 CCTV cameras to cover platforms, footbridges, car parks and other areas of these 14 stations plus extending the coverage at eight stations which already have CCTV. A proportion of the cameras will be capable of being swung round to zoom in on incidents. All will produce court-admissible evidence stored onto a hard drive and available for recovery by the British Transport Police up to a month afterwards.

A total of 31 Help Points, which allow customers to speak directly to ScotRail staff for information or assistance, will also be fitted. Over the coming weeks ScotRail will be testing the use of induction loops in the Help Point system to make it more accessible for the hard of hearing. If successful, induction loops will be incorporated into new the Help Points being installed under this contract.

The cameras and Help Points will be monitored from ScotRail's Customer Services Centre at Dunfermline, which is already

Haddington Branch

Proposals to restore the Haddington branch have not hit the buffers. East Lothian Council Leader, Norman Murray, has confirmed this by stating that the re-opening of the Haddington branch was still among the Council's priorities and aspirations and was seen as part of an integrated transport system which also included the re-opening of East Linton station.

With many new houses planned for Haddington, the rail link is a necessity, as many of the new residents will commute to work in Edinburgh. There should be a park and ride facility to benefit not only Haddington residents, but people in surrounding areas.

Last year, we were "quoted" £9m to restore the branch to Haddington. Various comments have recently appeared in the East Lothian Courier:

- Make use of the derelict Oak Tree Café site: RAGES have looked at this and it is too high above the existing track bed
- Lay rails only as far as a siding at Longniddry: RAGES believes that a through service to Edinburgh and possibly beyond is required
- One reader also commented that the Longniddry and Drem car parks were usually full and was unable to get parked, so

did not take the train!

RAGES have surveyed the line, but believes that the best site is to the south of the Roodlands Hospital just east of the Alderston Bridge with sufficient area for a platform and a park and ride facility. Access to this would be from Hospital Road.

Mr Murray told RAGES: "The Labour Party in East Lothian has long had a commitment to restoring Haddington to the rail network and East Lothian Council is fully in support of this desire. I personally would love to be able to jump on a train each morning at Musselburgh and travel by rail to Haddington. I have to say though, that there are a number of demands to improve rail facilities within East Lothian and it is a question of prioritisation and our immediate priority is to restore a local rail service between Dunbar and Edinburgh and we are currently working on this with Scottish Borders Council and RAGES.

"Because East Lothian has an increasing population, it also needs improved means of travel and undoubtedly rail will be the primary means of rapid transit in the 21st century and I have no doubt that the Haddington Branch will form part of both a local and national rail system."

Meeting with East Lothian Council

A meeting took place with East Lothian Council on 27th November to primarily discuss the way forward with the bid for Scottish Executive funding for the feasibility study into ScotRail running a local service to Dunbar and Berwick thereafter. Present from the Council were Pete Collins and Paul Ince, Rab Watson from the Scottish Executive and Tom Thorburn and John Denning.

John Denning gave a résumé of the meeting held with Minister for Transport, Nicol Steven MSP.

It was stated that the Scottish Executive:

- are content with the proposal to implement the local service between Edinburgh and Berwick, with Dunbar being the first step in this enhancement of services – this will in turn reduce congestion in the City
- see no problem with financial assistance for the bid (Invernet had received around £0.5m towards driver training and an additional unit)

- recommend that the bid be a joint one between East Lothian and Scottish Borders Councils
- the forthcoming ScotRail franchise has a change mechanism built into it.

East Lothian Council had been in touch with Scottish Borders Council and had agreed the incremental approach of local services. Developers of the next phase of new houses in Dunbar should contribute to upgrade of rail services at Dunbar. This is similar to those that were discussed at a previous RAGES committee meeting with Bryant Homes, but did not come to fruition. Financing of East Linton station on the other hand, would have to be borne by the public sector.

Finally, replacement stock for the North Berwick service was discussed. It was intimated that the ex-Virgin loco-hauled stock was being proposed as a substitute for the 322 EMUs.

Better Security

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responsible for 33 stations.

"ScotRail are committed to improving customer information and providing a safe and secure environment for our customers," says ScotRail Managing Director Peter Cotton.

"CCTV has already proved its worth in terms of security and customer care at the 33 stations linked to Dunfermline Customer Services Centre and the 126 linked to our Strathclyde Customer Services Centre at Paisley. This programme is the third stage in the expansion of the Dunfermline Centre, and extends coverage to the majority of stations in the Lothians and Forth Valley. We are delighted that the Scottish Executive has agreed to fund this work, which compliments other investment to improve the capacity and quality of the network. "

The stations in the RAGES area to be newly fitted with CCTV are North Berwick, Drem, Longniddry and Prestonpans.

RAGES' stations to be equipped with Customer Information Systems are North Berwick, Drem, Longniddry, Prestonpans, Wallyford and Musselburgh. The latter two already have CCTV but are to receive additional cameras for expansion of car parks.

Progress on the Local Service to Berwick

RAGES met with with Nicol Stephen MSP, and Transport Minister, and John Home Robertson MSP in late October. Various points were brought up which were reinforced by photographs taken by RAGES member Tom Dickson, showing



the overcrowding of Dunbar platform at 07:40 hrs.

The meeting went very well and started with John Home Robertson MSP describing to the Minister why Dunbar should have a local service provided. His description of the crowds awaiting the 07:44 being likened to that in India with passengers almost clinging onto the sides and roofs went down well.

Nicol replied in a reasonably upbeat fashion to say that he was very aware of RAGES Aims, even down to the point of re-opening East Linton, extending the service to Berwick and re-opening Reston. He reminded us of the fact that the franchise bid was to run the services as they stood at present i.e. nothing extra but that our quest would be looked at favourably.

He also intimated to our two representatives from East Lothian Council, namely John Denning and Councillor Norman Hampshire, that East Lothian Council (ELC) should take the lead in negotiations and that the Scottish Executive would look favourably at expenses incurred. John and Norman put forward the plus points and the requirements of East Lothian Council to the Minister.

Mr Watson, representing the Scottish Executive, gave a lot of good advice and compliments to the group, so much so, that he stayed behind after the Minister left for further discussion.

The following joint press release was issued shortly after the meeting held in the chambers at Duns on 9th December. This meeting was originally to have been between Scottish Borders Council and ourselves to discuss the submission of a bid for funding for the Reston Station feasibility study. Having been to both of the aforementioned meetings, I took the opportunity of having East Lothian Council representatives at this meeting as well, which we are delighted to say went very well.

The press release read:

Members and officials of Scottish Borders Council and East Lothian Council recently met with representatives of RAGES (Rail Action Group East of Scotland) to discuss proposals for investigating a local rail service on the East Coast Main Railway line between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed.

The main outcome, from what was described by all concerned as a very productive meeting, was a commitment from the Councils to develop a brief that would allow the business case for a local service to be examined. The three parties agreed that the logical way forward would be to concentrate on the introduction of a local service to Dunbar as a first stage and develop the case for extending the service to Berwick coupled with the reinstatement of stations at Reston and East Linton as subsequent stages.

David Parker, Leader of Scottish Borders Council, described the decision to commission a study as a great example of partnership working and hoped that other interested bodies such as the Scottish Executive and Strategic Rail Authority might be persuaded to contribute towards the funding of the study.

Cllr Hampshire, Environment Convener with East Lothian Council highlighted the volume of new housing in Dunbar and other areas and the ever increasing need for convenient and efficient public transport alternatives to the car.

Tom Thorburn, Chairman of RAGES stated “we are delighted with this development with East Lothian and Scottish Borders Council and look forward, in time, to the delivery of a local rail service that fully meets the desires and requirements of the residents of Berwickshire and East Lothian”

In the last issue of *The Rages Rag*, it was reported that we had sent memo to all politicians urging them to lobby Nicol Stephen about the local service to be part of the next ScotRail franchise. In response to that, we had many letters of support from these politicians, attaching their own letters to the Transport Minister. In light of this publicity, RAGES also sent letters to lapsed members who use Dunbar station, inviting them to re-join RAGES. Six have done so - welcome back!

Membership

We now have around 180 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.

Congestion Charging

RAGES reply to Transport Initiatives Edinburgh

Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES) welcomes the opportunity to comment on City of Edinburgh's proposed Congestion Charging Scheme.

RAGES is a pressure group wishing to see good Rail based public transport links restored to the east of Edinburgh down to the border at Berwick-upon-Tweed. We also wish to see current bus timetables timed better to train times at existing stations and for future new bus routes to be linked in properly such that public transport can be fully taken up by virtually everyone (especially the 38% who do not have access to the motor car). In addition, one of the 'Groups' objectives is to promote environmentally friendly transport wherever possible.

In broad terms, RAGES supports the initiative of City of Edinburgh's proposed Congestion Charging Scheme which will in turn bring about a cleaner and safer environment within Edinburgh but would like to express the following points: -

- It does seem unfair that some residencies outwith the outer cordon i.e. Currie, Balerno, South Queensferry are to be exempt from the charge – this is a very dubious decision when viewed from those who have to pay in places such as Musselburgh. If those 'exempt communities' were made to pay, this would altogether appear more fair with the result of additional scheme income;
- The leaflet does not give a definitive breakdown of where/when the income from the scheme would be spent i.e. are we going to see the grandiose projects sucking up all the monies

for the first five to ten years, is the money going to be allocated to one Local Authority and then a subsequent LA?

- The 45/55% split of income does somewhat feel biased in favour of Edinburgh. Apart from the need for the re-introduction of the South Suburban Rail Link and Trams, Edinburgh does have an excellent bus service within its bounds. It has to be said that this bus service has the potential to improve after the scheme implementation, as buses will not have the volume of cars to contend with;

- In the 'Groups' area, there are currently no train services which arrive in Edinburgh prior to the 07.00 hr scheme charging time. It is therefore felt that train services should be implemented prior to the scheme implementation such that there is already an alternative form of transport to the car.

In conclusion, the Group wish to see congestion charging implemented by City of Edinburgh Council, which takes into account the above observations and a scheme that favours Rail based public transport. We would also feel uneasy about introduction of buses as a primary means of entering/exiting the City as it is well proven that they have poor 'take up', cannot compete in time scale of journey and comfort. RAGES' Aims and Objectives which include re-introduction of local passenger train services to Dunbar and Berwick, re-opened stations at East Linton and Reston, and restoration of the branchline to give Haddington back its rail service could easily

New trains for North Berwick

From Page 1

although Pumpkin on Platform 4 is now selling morning newspapers in addition to its food and drink.

At Waverley, the barriers will be restricted to Platforms 12 to 18, so most North Berwick services operating at Platforms 7, 20 or 21 will be subject to manual ticket checks. We can expect these to be much more frequent than at present.

ScotRail intend to introduce the scheme gradually during the spring, with staff continuing to be on hand to assist in the use of the barriers and deal with specific requirements such as heavy luggage, wheelchair and buggy access.

New Year Services

As is now normal practice ScotRail operated no services throughout the country on December 25th and January 1st and only in the Strathclyde area on December 26th. January 2nd saw the new enhanced Sunday service on the North Berwick operating, thus giving an hourly frequency from 1120 to 2220,

Given that this is the best level of service recorded on the line it may seem churlish to comment on any deficiencies, but RAGES is concerned that for increasing numbers of employees, especially in the retail and finance sectors, January 2nd is becoming a normal working day and services are not really designed to cater for this. We will therefore be pressing, from 2006 (January 2nd 2005 falls on a Sunday) for earlier trains to be provided to give 09:00 hrs arrivals in Edinburgh. If this is not practical (and we acknowledge that the costs may be comparatively high in relation to likely passenger numbers) then we would look to see if bus services could start earlier to offer an alternative. West Lothian Council have, for example, funded express buses from Bathgate Linlithgow and Livingston into Edinburgh for 09:00 hrs starts on January 2nd as an alternative to rail with reasonable success over the past three years.

And a final thought as a major tourist destination is the absence of ScotRail trains on January 1st still reasonable? GNER ran a 2-hourly service between Glasgow and Edinburgh and then southbound on January 1st so the central belt wasn't without services.