

# The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland

www.rages.org.uk

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## Local Rail Meeting

On Tuesday 3 July 2012, the regular local rail meeting was again hosted by East Lothian Council. However, as the council administration had changed since our last meeting, Cllr Michael Veitch, deputy leader and transport portfolio holder, was in the chair. Present were MSPs, Iain Gray and Paul Wheelhouse, councillors and council staff from East Lothian and Scottish Borders Councils, SEStran and committee members of RAGES.

Cllr Veitch paid tribute to Cllr Paul McLennan for his past chairing of this regular meeting and hoped that he would continue to be a member of the group. Michael declared the progress for a local rail service a "beacon of success" under Paul's chairmanship.

Since the last meeting, the member's debate had been held successfully at Holyrood, the Scottish Stations Investment Fund had been announced by the Scottish Government and SEStran had produced the final Study Brief after consultation with Transport Scotland.

Regarding our application to the Investment Fund, it was noted that the Government had yet to decide what the criteria for a successful bid would be, but had advised that a STAG2 would be a necessary requirement. It was also suggested that funding contributions for the stations should be sought from local developers and the local councils. The formation of a local rail partnership to promote the local service would also be useful.

The main topic of the meeting was the furtherance of the STAG2.

- It had been updated in certain areas as suggested by Transport Scotland and was ready for release when funding for the study was in place
- Funding was in place from Scottish Borders Council and approval from East Lothian Council was imminent
- It was thought that the study would take six months to complete
- As the Councils were the customers this time, this meeting would be able to appraise the study before it was forwarded to the Government
- It was suggested that the study should show what else will be delivered with the stations, eg extra housing development
- Whilst passengers do not like to change trains on a long journey, in particular older people and young families with luggage, it was thought that creating Berwick as a hub for a local service connecting into long distance services could be beneficial. With Berwick as an island platform, train transfer would be relatively easy

- It has long been suggested that an extra platform at Dunbar would relieve the pressure on northbound trains stopping at Dunbar as that would eliminate the need to cross over the southbound lines twice
- It was also noted that the ECML re-franchising consultation was under way - see page two of this issue.

Actions arising from the meeting were as follows:

- Formal letter from East Lothian Council to SEStran re funding of the Study
- A Station Investment Fund bid to be drafted by SEStran
- A letter to the Minister for Transport advising him of our programme
- MSPs would seek a meeting with the Minister and Transport Scotland officials
- Responses on the East Coast re-franchise consultation would be circulated round the members of the meeting

## Update on the local rail meeting

Since the meeting, East Lothian Council has confirmed with SEStran that it will fund its share of the STAG2.

At our committee meeting the following week, it was thought that it would be of great benefit for the two Councils to do a 'Wrap Around' Study which would show the economic benefit of the new stations. This would be created in-house by the councils and would accompany the STAG2 when sent to the Minister for Transport.

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 4.

# Inter City East Coast Franchise Consultation

Whilst RAGES will be submitting a response to the above consultation, several members of RAGES attended the Edinburgh presentation by the UK Department of Transport on the East Coast Main Line Franchise on 17 July. Also present were members of Railfuture Scotland, Capital Rail Action Group, officers from City of Edinburgh Council, Glasgow City Council, East Lothian Council, the MP for Edinburgh North and Sarah Boyack MSP.

The Department had prepared a presentation which unfortunately was very England-focused and services north of Edinburgh were barely mentioned, despite 25 stations north of Edinburgh being served by the current franchise. It was appreciated that the busier passenger flows were south of the Border, nevertheless the presentation could have been prepared better for a Scottish audience. It was pointed out that CoSLA was not even listed as a statutory consultee nor were the Strategic Rail Partnerships in Scotland. Notwithstanding this, questions were asked about the Glasgow and Inverness services and inadequate catering and luggage space were highlighted as issues on these longer journeys.

Robert Samson from Passenger Focus gave a helpful presentation on recent customer surveys, stating that cleanliness on trains was of high importance, and more important to passengers to Scotland than journey time. He noted that satisfaction with East Coast had recently dipped, and was currently at 87% from a high of 89%.

A public body should be considered to run the franchise was Sarah Boyack's view, and the Department should not exclusively consider private firms. She pointed out that previous private firms had failed to run the franchise adequately.

Given that Dunbar was not even listed as a station on the ECML in the presentation, there were enquiries from RAGES representatives as to the future of Dunbar as an East Coast station. It seemed that this was not a deliberate omission, but possibly a lack of awareness of the important role of Dunbar Station in the area.

There was further discussion on the length of the franchise, which could be increased up to a 15 year period and would implement the recommendations of the McNulty report in this aspect; £250m of undefined improvements that could include the possible gating of more stations; and proposals for the management of change, including the provision of information to passengers. Passenger Focus had highlighted that accurate information, especially in times of disruption, was unsurprisingly a key priority for passengers.

The consultation runs until September 2012 and RAGES members are encouraged to make their personal responses. It can be accessed at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-24/>

## Passenger Focus Workshop

Barrie Forrest attended this workshop held in Perth on 13 June 2012. He found it most useful, in particular being able to talk with the various participants during the day. He points out the following items of interest.

Robert Samson's presentation included the work done by Passenger Focus in Scotland:

- National Passenger Survey - shared results and discuss areas performance with ScotRail and others
- ScotRail franchise work
- Transport consortia - regular reports covering our research and policy work
- Scottish Government HS2 agenda
- Scottish Parliament - inquiry into next franchise
- Chairing ScotRail Customer Forums
- Sharing our bus work with MSPs and others
- Edinburgh Waverley and Haymarket Station re-development
- Passenger Transport User Committee membership and input on their policy work covering passenger information and integration

Paul Salvesson who has an extensive background in rail campaigning and the industry itself:

- Groups are a strong force in the country. Volunteers are not dependent on funding but highly knowledgeable with experience and beacon of stability, perspective, understanding and good relationships. The rail industry now engages with a variety of organisations.

- Strengths are time commitment people can give, local knowledge and intelligence, bringing assistance in kind and creating good will. Weaknesses are availability of volunteers, sustainability and doing what volunteers or sponsors want.
- Local services with local campaigns for local stations gives diversity of work. Making stations look nice encourages industry to contribute more. However people here are representative of groups, but are groups representative of passengers, e.g. mums with prams, disabled, young people? Need to also focus on quick wins: extra services or stops are shown to be winners; groups need short term objectives as well.

Matthew Andrews talked about a toolkit of resources:

- Groups should ensure they are able to take advantage of big opportunities to be heard, such as formal consultations; rail franchise replacement, timetable consultations and impact of service cuts.
- The wealth of Passenger Focus research is available from our website. This will be revisited to make it easier to find relevant reports. In addition, we are keen to provide more issue-specific extracts of research to support groups' work, extending its reach and delivering better value for money.

Barrie notes that RAGES has a very good relationship with Passenger Focus which he hopes will continue.

# ScotRail Takes Tough Stance on Alcohol-Fuelled Anti-Social Behaviour

In June ScotRail announced that it is to ban the consumption and carrying of alcohol on its trains between 9pm and 10am. This ban started on 20 July.

Their press release noted that “the move comes in response to concerns from the travelling public about anti-social behaviour on trains and calls from the Scottish Government for action.”

ScotRail will also refuse travel to people who are not considered fit to do so due to the effects of alcohol. They stressed the purpose of the ban is to prevent a small minority having a disproportionate negative impact on the majority of passengers as they should be able to travel in a safe and friendly environment.

Public support for the move is underpinned by a recent survey which found 84% of respondents in favour of banning alcohol from trains after 9pm.

In the past six months alone, a ScotRail review uncovered at least 260 occasions when British Transport Police (BTP) had to respond to drink-related incidents; an increasing number of trains delayed due to anti-social behaviour - affecting customer perceptions of the railway and damaging ScotRail’s reputation, and at least one accident a week caused by excessive alcohol.

Chief Superintendent Ellie Bird, area commander for the Scotland Area of BTP, said: “Crime on Scotland’s railways is at a record low. However, combating anti-social behaviour and disruption to the rail network remains a priority for us.”

She also noted that “the consumption of alcohol is prohibited on other forms of public transport, such as buses,

and trains should be no different.”

ScotRail launched a four-week campaign to make customers aware of the impending ban from 20 July, to be followed by a fortnight-long ‘softly, softly’ stance.

The ban will be enforced by British Transport Police through the national Railway Byelaws which allow a train operator to stop people in a state of intoxication from travelling, and to publicly declare that certain services are so-called ‘dry trains’ where the consumption and carrying of alcohol are banned.

The only exception to the 9pm - 10am rule will be the overnight Caledonian Sleeper train to and from London, often dubbed a ‘hotel on wheels.’

ScotRail has also pledged to enhance its station and on-train patrols during the initial phases of the campaign to mitigate the possibility of staff assaults and other offences.

ScotRail stressed that customers’ bags will not be searched before or during their journeys, and is using existing Railway Byelaws as the most expedient way to introduce the crackdown on anti-social behaviour and to send out a clear message that it expects customers to be able to travel in a safe, friendly environment and not have journeys disrupted.

‘Last orders’ will apply on trains with catering services. Alcohol will not be sold from 8.30pm and customers will be asked to finish any alcoholic drinks by 9pm.

BTP will be alerted if passengers refuse to leave after being declined access to trains or if behaviour causes concern to train crew or customers during a journey.

## ScotRail’s Environmental Briefing

In a recent briefing, ScotRail advised that it is committed to investing in a better tomorrow for Scotland.

Central to this ambition is our commitment to the environment, especially reducing our impact and cutting our carbon footprint. Although rail emits less than 1% of the total UK CO2 and has a lower carbon footprint than car or air travel, we know that more can be done to protect our environment.

Points of note are:

- New stations and services increase opportunities for people to switch from the car. In 2011/12 ScotRail carried 81.1 million passengers (up 30% since taking over the franchise) and run more than 2,300 services (up 10% since 2004)
- They have pioneered eco-driving, which involves all their drivers receiving training on optimising acceleration and deceleration to minimise fuel consumption and thereby reducing our carbon footprint
- They are also involved in renewable generation and have installed four photovoltaic panels and a 5kW wind

turbine at stations

- ScotRail’s Class 380 trains, which are used on our North Berwick/Dunbar services, are as green as trains come. Smart design means that energy use is easily captured and regenerative braking returns energy back into the system
- Since 2008 they have recycled nearly 2000 tonnes of material
- Staff at Perth have formed a biodiversity group to encourage new plants and insects to thrive
- Virtually all ScotRail’s stations have secure cycle parking facilities with free cycle reservations and guaranteed cycle spaces when pre-booked

Recognised within the industry has gained ScotRail four environmental awards this year – including the Sustainable Excellence title at the Network Rail Partnership Awards.

However, ScotRail want to build on this success in future and for example are planning further research on older fleets to reduce their energy use.

## Festival Trains

First ScotRail North Berwick services will see additional late night trains again this year for the festivals. These will depart Edinburgh Waverley at 23:50 hrs on Fridays from August 3 to 24 and at 23:52 hrs on Saturdays from August 4 to 25. These trains will also link with onward Drem to Dunbar buses.

There will also be extra late night trains for the Fringe by the Sea festival in North Berwick, which runs from 6 to 12 August when a 23:59 hrs service will run from North Berwick to Edinburgh from 6 to 11 August and a 23:59 hrs service to Edinburgh on Sunday 12 August. They will call at Drem, Longniddry, Prestonpans, Wallyford and Musselburgh.

ScotRail will also provide extra trains for customers after the Virgin Money Fireworks on 2 September which includes extra services from Edinburgh to North Berwick and Newcraighall.

# Key Route Strategies for Dunbar Station

This article has been held over since last November due to shortage of space.

At that time, Iain Gray, MSP for East Lothian and Fiona O'Donnell, MP for East Lothian received a letter from Mr David Simpson, Route Managing Director at Network Rail, in response to a letter written to Mr Simpson to clarify Network Rail's position of the Key Route Strategy in advance of any adverse weather conditions this winter.

"Iain and Fiona are pleased at Networks Rail's recognition of the importance of Dunbar Station to commuters and also welcome the new approach to the Key Route Strategy, which should mean that Dunbar station is bypassed less readily than happened last year. However, they are disappointed that there is no guarantee that Dunbar will be unaffected during any period of the most severe weather conditions. Iain and Fiona will continue to argue for the upgrading of points to end this problem once and for all, but regrettably that will not happen before this winter sets in."

In the Network Rail letter, Mr Simpson says: "... a new approach to Key Route Strategy (KRS) implementation has been developed ... Specifically in relation to East Lothian, we have taken the approach that our industry priorities in severe weather must ensure Drem and Portobello Junctions are maintained operable. This allows a service to operate to all stations to North Berwick, as well as to Brunstane and Newcraighall park and ride. It also ensures strategic longer distance cross-border links to England are protected ...

"We do, however, recognise the importance of the Dunbar commuter market and have reflected this in the KRS document, with a three option approach. Two of these options mean Dunbar will continue to be serviced, albeit one of them will be with a reduced service option focused on the morning and evening peak access. Only under the worst case option, and the most severe and widespread conditions, would all points at Dunbar have to be 'locked' to leave Dunbar un-serviced in favour of protecting the longer distance strategic network resilience."

Mr Simpson cannot guarantee that Dunbar will remain unaffected, but hopes that this new approach will mean that Dunbar continues to be serviced for longer and that any disruption will be more limited.

At our meeting in March 2012 with Karen Boswell, Managing Director of East Coast, she explained that the by-passing of Dunbar in December 2010 had been caused by extreme weather conditions and that safety for all had been at the centre of the decision to by-pass Dunbar. Access to the junctions was particularly difficult for rail staff. However, RAGES noted that East Coast had tried to keep us up to date with the situation as it was unfolding.

## Saturday Night Train to Dunbar

This 22:06 hrs service was introduced in December 2011 for a trial period of 12 months after which it will be reviewed. RAGES committee members have noticed that recently there have been an average of 25 passengers travelling on it.

However, in the minutes of Transport Scotland's Franchise Performance Meeting of 1 March 2012 under an item headed Service Level Commitment Delivery it is noted that "... Dunbar Saturday evening services were showing encouraging loadings."

Nonetheless, RAGES would further encourage their members to use this and other Dunbar services to ensure their continuation and possible expansion.

## ScotRail's Performance Improves

The National Passenger Survey results for Spring 2012 published recently shows that the overall satisfaction with ScotRail's performance is 89%. This is three percentage points higher than the same time last year and six points higher than the UK average.

Punctuality and reliability, another key indicator, was up six points at 87%, which is six points higher than the UK average.

Overall, ScotRail exceeded the UK average on 31 of the survey's 33 indicators including value for money and staff helpfulness.

Customer satisfaction levels increased in 29 out of the 33 categories when compared with Spring 2011.

For example, satisfaction ratings on sufficient room for passengers to sit or stand rose year on year by eight points to 77% compared with spring 2011. That is eight points better than the UK average. This was in spite of record passenger numbers of 81.1 million and followed the introduction of more trains and more seats across the network.

Ratings on the provision of information during journeys rose eight points to 80%, 10 points higher than the UK average, while customer satisfaction on the availability of staff on trains increased by seven points to 72%, 25 points, higher than the UK average of 47%.

The attitude and helpfulness of on-train staff rose by two points to 81% and by three points to 78% for station staff. The respective UK comparisons were 64% and 71%.

These improvements are a tribute to the commitment of our staff and reflect how we have responded to customer feedback.

### Membership

We now have around 150 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.