

# The Rages Rag



Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland



[www.rages.org.uk](http://www.rages.org.uk)

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## Local Rail Study - where are we?

In September 2011, MVA Consultancy published their report which had been commissioned by Transport Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government. That study looked at a local rail service from Edinburgh to Berwick with re-opened stations at East Linton and Reston. Also included were other options round this basic service.

Our full analysis of the study was published in The Rages Rag issue 51 of October 2011. Greatly summarising the one hundred page report, it concluded that there were additional significant revenue and user benefits generated by the two new stations at East Linton and Reston, but did not eliminate the net costs and disbenefits associated with a purely Berwick service. In financial terms, these services would require an initial annual subsidy of between £2.5m and £3.5m, although the additional stations do have the impact of reducing subsidy. Any additional journey time associated with the introduction of a Reston stop to a Berwick service would not have a material detrimental impact on existing passengers as very few would be travelling to or from Berwick. However, an East Linton stop would have a material impact on Dunbar passengers if journey times were increased as a result. The quantified benefit cost ratio (BCR) for an Edinburgh to Berwick service is 1.10 when considering re-opened stations at East Linton and Reston.

RAGES and our local MSPs had a meeting with the Minister for Transport in November 2011 (reported in The Rages Rag issue 52 of January 2012) when he indicated that a further study was required before he would consider our case. However, he volunteered to visit East Linton and Reston which was accomplished in February 2012 and reported in The Rages Rag issue 53 of April 2012.

In the meantime SEStran put together a brief for the additional work to be undertaken to enhance the initial MVA study which was submitted to Transport Scotland and MVA Consultancy for agreement and costing.

The brief was divided into seven tasks:

- Review local bus/coach services and appraise options for new services - this is a requirement of STAG2
- Operational solutions - the study assumed the local services would be resourced with additional trains and crew, but cognisance should be taken of the opportunity to: use train sets which terminate at Edinburgh to run through to Dunbar or Berwick; assess changes to the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme to provide sets to do this; and to integrate the North Berwick sets
- Impact on LDHS services - improved local services could be combined with reduced long distance stops
- The Socio Economic context - these issues should be

expanded more than was done in the original study

- Alternative sites - the merits of a station nearer to Eyemouth should be considered. The meeting thought that this was unnecessary, but SEStran has insisted on its inclusion
- Funding sources - the impact of new stations being funded by the respective local authorities rather than central government should be assessed
- Reporting - a report should be produced which will supplement the 2011 Study.

This additional study is being commissioned and funded by East Lothian Council, Scottish Borders Council and SEStran and as such we are able to comment on its content before onward submission to the Minister.

The initial draft report has now been issued and will be discussed at the next Local Rail Study meeting to be held on 8th May. Meanwhile comments on the draft have been forwarded to MVA Consultancy for consideration in the final draft.

RAGES has been privy to a copy of the report and we can say that there is an extensive chapter on the socio-economic improvements, including the views of local business, that a rail service would bring to a county that has no rail stations.

It is also good to see that MVA Consultancy paid tribute to the public meetings at East Linton and Reston held last September.

However, we cannot go into any more detail at this time, but will publish a full analysis of the study as soon as it has been released from its current confidentiality state.

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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# ScotRail News

## Passenger numbers up

The Managing Director of First ScotRail has reported that ScotRail has beaten passenger records for the ninth consecutive year. Figures released recently show that they carried 83.3 million customers in the year ending 31 March 2013 which is up 2.6% on last year's record-breaking 81.1 million.

Passenger numbers have now risen by 33% since their franchise began in 2004.

He also noted that: "The rise in passenger numbers is pleasing, and shows that we are connecting even more communities, helping to grow the economy and encouraging people out of their cars onto public transport.

"There's still more to be done, and we will continue to expand services and improve the customer experience."

## Fare anomalies

ScotRail also announced that from May 19 rail fares for more than a quarter of a million journeys a year are being cut after ScotRail and Transport Scotland worked together to tackle decades old fare 'anomalies'.

These inconsistencies occur when it is cheaper to buy a ticket from A to B, and then from B to C, rather than from A to C in one go. The changes announced mean it will almost always be cheaper for a customer to buy one end-to-end ticket for their journey rather than purchase separate tickets for two different legs of the same journey.

As a general a rule of thumb, ScotRail has ensured that end-to-end fares will be at least 50p less than the cheapest 'split ticketing' option.

The new price structure will remove more than 1500 of the inconsistencies, making it easier for customers to obtain best value fares for the journey they wish to make. This initiative puts the interests of the customer first, by tackling the fare inconsistencies that are most prevalent in Scotland.

# East Coast Wins National Award for Customer Information

Train operator East Coast won a prestigious national award for the way it manages disruption to its services when it was presented with the Silver Whistle prize for the most improved rail operator in managing disruption at a rail industry event in London.

The awards are organised by the Institution of Railway Operators and the trade journal Modern Railways, to publicly acknowledge best practice in the rail industry.

East Coast's award recognises the improvements that have been made in the provision of customer information at times of disruption.

East Coast Customer Information and Systems Manager Jon Harris said: "The award was based on customer ratings in the independent Autumn 2012 National Passenger Survey (NPS), carried out by the transport watchdog Passenger Focus.

"The awards judges noted a 12% improvement in East Coast's rating for this area over the last 12 months in the NPS survey.

"While we welcome this, we fully recognise that there are further improvements which we need to make to the flow of information at times when services are affected by disruption outside East Coast's immediate control.

"We have set up a task force to drive these improvements forward, especially in the quality, consistency and delivery of information, including via electronic customer information screens on platforms and in real-time via our website and our Twitter feed."

# RAGES Committee Vacancies

## Treasurer

At our last annual general meeting, our treasurer, Harald Vox, intimated that he wished to resign as Treasurer from March 2013.

Harald has been a worthy treasurer since September 2004.

The duties of treasurer involve:

- Maintaining the accounts of RAGES
- Attending committee meetings - around six per year in Dunbar - to report on the finance
- Banking money from memberships etc
- Paying any invoices and refunding members' expenses
- Preparing the accounts for the auditor
- Attending the annual general meeting to present the audited accounts

## Berwick Representative

This post has been vacant for some time and we would appeal for a member to represent Berwick.

The duties for the station representatives are:

- Ideally travel on the trains out of Berwick
- Perhaps attend the committee meetings to report on happenings at Berwick or send a report
- Produce a report for the newsletter

Interest should be registered either by e-mail to [information@rages.org.uk](mailto:information@rages.org.uk) or by post to the editor's address at the foot of page 4.

# Haddington News

Our campaign to re-open the Haddington rail branch received a boost when it featured on the front page of the East Lothian News recently. Pictured on the railway walk at Gateside were Jan Wilson, Haddington and District Community Council Chair, and your editor. This article had resulted from the News's receipt of our newsletter saying that RAGES had been tasked by the local councillors to gauge the residents' interest in a re-opened station before providing funding for a feasibility study. The photograph and a summary of the article also featured on the East Lothian News website where there was an on-line poll. The voting asked people: "Are you in favour of the reinstatement of a rail link to Haddington."

- 87 per cent (84) of votes said "Yes - something needs to be done to reduce the amount of traffic on the roads, particularly if hundreds of new houses are to be built in Haddington."

- 13 per cent (13) of votes said "No - it's a pipe dream and the cost would mean it would never happen."

RAGES is always pleased at the support we get from our local papers.

At a meeting in November to discuss the re-opening, one of the actions was for RAGES to raise the subject with the Haddington Vision group and to liaise with the community council on ways of gauging the interest of the residents. However, the newly created Haddington Community Development Trust has as one of its concerns the improvement of transport links in Haddington. One of its directors has discussed the rail options with RAGES and it is hoped that the Trust will be circulating an all encompassing questionnaire round the town which will include questions about a re-opened rail link.

## Bus timetable change

The 121 timetable run by Prentice Coaches was altered recently. The main change was to make the last journey later to give time for those finishing work at 17:00 hrs in Haddington to catch the last bus to North Berwick which is now 17:15.

It then leaves North Berwick at 18:02 to come back to Haddington. Originally it came straight back via Congalton however Prentice noticed that there was a train due at Drem at 18:11 so they have decided to make the return journey go via Fenton Barns and Drem. Arriving in Drem at 18:20 it is ideal for anyone coming off that train.

Although there is slightly increased mileage this was done at no cost to the Council and already there has been a significant rise in passengers using this re-routed service.

Prentice would like to try and tie more journeys in with the trains but at the moment the timings of school journeys does not allow for this.

## Latest estimates of station usage

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has published the latest estimates of station usage data based on ticket sales in the financial year 2011/12. The estimates are subdivided by ticket type - full, reduced and season tickets.

The dataset contains estimates of the number of passengers travelling to and from each station and are based on ticket sales data from the national ticketing database. The ORR warns that there are limitations to the dataset and these estimates should be treated with caution!

Below are the stations which interest us with a comparison for the previous financial year.

Station	Full	Reduced	Season	Total	2010/11
Drem	20,127	15,042	17,656	52,825	50,104
Dunbar	12,078	101,288	68,060	181,426	166,958
Longniddry	32,427	28,699	20,577	81,703	77,020
Musselburgh	89,961	59,919	43,490	193,370	182,345
North Berwick	65,094	117,326	52,623	235,043	226,428
Prestonpans	41,239	26,209	37,871	105,319	103,404
Wallyford	53,857	30,676	35,887	120,420	110,886
Berwick-Upon-Tweed	13,022	199,153	27,541	239,716	227,284

## Talk to Aln Valley Railway Society

In November 2011 RAGES received an invited to Alnwick to give the Aln Valley Railway Society a talk on the role and activities of our group during their winter season of 2012-13. This was done on 21 March 2013 when Tom Thorburn, Barrie Forrest and Allison Cosgrove visited Alnwick and gave the presentation.

After the event, we received an e-mail from their Press and Publicity Officer thanking our three, "... on behalf of all those who attended the meeting, for giving us such an excellent presentation yesterday evening. It was most enjoyable!

"We were very impressed, not only with all of the work you have done, but with the successes that you have achieved! You have certainly made people take notice of RAGES!"

Their work to re-instate the rail link from Alnmouth to Alnwick can be found at [www.alnvalleyrailway.co.uk](http://www.alnvalleyrailway.co.uk)

# Briefing on Community Rail Partnerships

Allison Cosgrove, who provided these notes, and Barrie Forrest attended a briefing by the Scottish Government on Community Rail Partnerships (CRP). It was obvious that there was a great deal of interest in the subject, as there were 30 to 40 attendees. The Minister for Transport, Keith Brown, opened the session, stating that there would be a number of benefits to communities who wanted to form a CRP. It was unclear at first what these would be, but the Minister advised that there would be some funding available of £50k per year for development of CRPs in Scotland and this sum would fund two development posts, with an additional £100k to be made available until 2015. The development posts would help communities get CRPs off the ground and the new ScotRail franchisee would be required to have a commitment to CRPs as part of the franchise.

The Minister noted the historical links that most towns in Scotland had with railways and expressed a wish to strengthen relationships with rail in towns. CRPs would deliver benefits to their towns, although at first it was not clear what these would be. He noted that ideas must be realistic in the current economic climate. The Station Investment Fund of £30m showed the Government was committed to investment in stations although he acknowledged that this did not go the whole way. His view was that CRPs would have the opportunity to access other private funding.

He emphasised the tourism potential of railways and role that CRPs can play in this (however I did wonder why VisitScotland was not seen as having a role here). There were opportunities to use station buildings for other purposes.

A question was asked about the stations fund and the Minister replied that 20 to 30 areas have registered an interest. There was a requirement for any initiative taken on to be via a STAG or similar, rather than money just handed out. Partnership working was essential and must be seen as potential for further funding from other sources.

No set timescale been established yet.

Neil Buxton from ACORP noted that heritage railways were not generally Community Rail Partnerships. The main idea in a CRP was to make existing facilities work better, by bringing together a wide range of interests, including buses, schools and other groups. He advised on the extension of the Oban service to include school pupils by working in partnership with Hitrans, ScotRail and Argyll and Bute Council. The cost of £34m annually would be met from current franchise agreement.

John Yellowlees, ScotRail's promoter of the Adopt a Station scheme, gave examples of stations that have been adopted. Gardening and artworks were features with Keep Scotland Beautiful assessing stations. A nominal rent was payable, and the adopters were required to pay their own fitting out costs, although some funding was available.

Network Rail's involvement with Community Rail was highlighted by Jerry Swift, Head of Community Rail. He noted that a CRP: promotes rail to non-users; helps to develop services; creates dialogue between line users; and encourages partnership and collaboration. There is an understanding that the rail industry doesn't always know what is best for users.

Local communities can gather evidence for new openings and better services. Examples were given of successes with some of the 90 local community led projects.

Richard Watts from Lancashire County Council gave information on sharing best practice. In his area there were six CRPs who work in partnership with others: the County Council owns the stations and leases them out. Richard gave a fascinating insight into the education work that had been done with 9 to 11 year olds which was linked to the national curriculum. This really encouraged young children to think of the railway as part of their community. Work had included pupils making castings in a local iron foundry which were on display at local stations. The programme - entitled "Investing in our Future Rail Travellers" - had resulted in 4500 children taking rail journeys which might not otherwise have happened. There were branded notice boards and sponsoring of local events. All this has hugely increased rail patronage in Lancashire.

## Results of discussions

What support do CRPs want from ACORP?

- Help was needed to take the process forward and an understanding of the mechanism for doing so
- How could community benefits be maximised?
- How can the local community participate if they are not normally rail users
- How the railway can meet local needs
- Getting information out to existing and potential railway users
- Tap into other funding streams – a Community Rail Liaison officer should be appointed
- Ideas like wi-fi in station car parks could be explored
- Stations that feel nicer and are not abused tend to be treated better.

How can the success of a CRP be measured?

- Can give a strong line identity
- Provision of good news stories
- Can overcome wrong perceptions of the railway and barriers to its use
- Opportunity to engage with your community and listen to what it has to say - by liaising with Transport Partnerships, community councils, business groups, local councillors, young people and community service schemes
- Increased community involvement and railway ridership.

From a RAGES point of view, it would be possible to create a Community Rail Partnership along the North Berwick or the Dunbar lines if local communities felt it could be of benefit. It would seem sensible to wait until the development posts were created and then invite the postholders to meet with local people to outline the benefits.