

The Rages Rag



Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland



www.rages.org.uk

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RAGES member becomes a Railfuture Director



After being elected as a Board member at the Railfuture's Annual General Meeting in April following a ballot of members, Allison Cosgrove is the only woman and the only Scottish person on the current committee, although there have been other women and Scottish people in the past. She does not yet have any specific responsibilities, but she says that she would be interested in passenger-related issues. She received the most votes in the recent ballot.

Allison, who stays in East Linton, has been a member of RAGES since 2001, became our East Linton representative in 2002 and has been our secretary since 2008.

At the Railfuture meeting of 25 May, a huge amount of ground was covered which in some cases was a little baffling to her as a brand new Board member. She notes that she found the following items useful.

Railfuture has a number of influential Vice-Presidents, and the Board at an earlier meeting had agreed that they were not involved enough in participating in furthering the organisation's aims. With this in mind, a dinner had been held in London to which many had been invited. This enabled first

hand discussion of the issues that are of prime importance to the organisation.

Time was spent evaluating the recent AGM in Durham and running over plans for the summer and autumn conferences. It was noted that there was a new organisation called Women in Rail, and it was suggested that this could be a useful theme for the Autumn 2014 conference. Allison suggested Scotland for the Spring 2015 conference after the Referendum has been held.

She also asks if you have used or will use a ferry, particularly in Scotland, between 1st October 2012 and 30th September 2013, that you visit <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Ferry+questionnaire+2013> and complete the questionnaire.

On an historic note, Railfuture was originally called the Railway Development Society (RDS). In 1998 when Tom Thorburn, our chairman, and Ralph Jordinson, our first Secretary, were both members of the Society, David Hansen, the then secretary of RDS, put Tom and Ralph in touch with each other when he realised their similar aims for a better rail service. Tom, of course, was interested in Reston and Ralph in East Linton.

Note of ScotRail meeting of 13 May

Allison also attended the above meeting which was with Steve Montgomery, MD of ScotRail, and other senior staff of the organisation. Those invited included representatives from the Edinburgh business community, tourism representatives, local authorities and political representatives. Railfuture Scotland was the only rail user group present.

Steve Montgomery spoke about the increase in rail usage, citing passenger growth from 63m to 86m during the term of the current franchise. He expected to see passenger growth reach 100m in the next 10 years. He evidenced the resources that had gone into stations and staffing – however he expressed a little disappointment that there had been little consultation by local authorities when producing their local development plans, as expertise was available within the organisation. He also noted the upgrades on the Aberdeen and Inverness routes.

Questions were asked on:

- fare collection at Musselburgh – Steve explained that although gates at Waverley could reduce this, it was unlikely that the larger TOCs would agree as it could impede passengers travelling longer distances if they had to change platforms
- the use of Oyster type cards – Season tickets on a Smart card basis could be purchased between Edinburgh-Glasgow and work was ongoing on tying this in with bus travel
- supporting campaign groups – although ScotRail could not provide direct support, help and advice was available if requested.

Positive comments were made on the Kids Go Free and Club 55 schemes. Steve advised that only 35% of passengers were commuters with the majority being leisure passengers.

Other questions were raised on: the likelihood of Newcraighall having a Sunday service once the Borders railway comes on stream; the progress of EGIP which Steve recognised many people were unhappy with; Caledonian Sleeper upgrade; local station parking, where he noted the huge increase in car park usage; and the rolling stock on inter-city routes.

Altogether an excellent meeting where ScotRail were very responsive to all queries raised.

Haddington Rail Link

As outlined in the last issue of *The Rages Rag*, we have had discussions with one of the Directors of the newly-formed Haddington Community Development Trust.

The Trust is interested in improving transport links in Haddington. Transport is required in both directions: for commuters and residents to gain access to the city and to entice visitors into Haddington to enjoy what our town offers.

Whilst RAGES and the Trust's aims would be for a rail link to be re-established into Haddington, a short term measure is being proposed.

Initial discussions have taken place with one of the local bus operators for advice on a link to one of the East Lothian railway stations. A bus link needs to get passengers off the train on to the bus, drive to Haddington and pick up passengers to take back to the station in the time for the next train. To begin with Longniddry and Drem were thought to be the best options, but timing is tight and bus-turning facilities are

awkward for both.

Latterly Wallyford has been chosen as the best option as:

- outward and inward bound trains meet there within minutes of each other
- the park and ride area gives good bus-turning
- access to the platforms is good
- overall journey times would be just over 30 minutes

Funding sources for the project are being investigated in partnership with East Lothian Council and Prentice Coaches.

RAGES fully supports this new initiative, but still has the rail option as its main Haddington aim for the future.

The question of ticketing remains: it needs to be integrated as there would not be time to buy a ticket at the station.

Pre-marketing and good publicity is essential - remember the X7? ScotRail have agreed in principle to include a Haddington bus link into the rail timetable.

RAGES looks forward to this proposal being implemented.

Improvements to Berwick Station



Our vice chairman, Barrie Forrest, recently met Louise Rutherford, East Coast Station Manager responsible for Berwick, to share their plans for improvements to Berwick station.

Plans are in place to install a Customer Lobby and Information Area within the same building as the First Class Lounge on the platform. The Customer Service Assistants will also have a new and bigger office. The first class lounge has been refurbished with a new coat of paint and the ticket office will also be re-painted. The exterior of the station buildings are to be refurbished.

Barrie's photograph shows in the foreground the First Class Lounge. To the rear of the Building where the Platform 2 sign is will become the Customers' Lobby and Customers' Information Area. Next to that will be Customer Service Assistance Office.

The work is due to be completed by the middle of October 2013.

Berwick is soon to have a permanent Station Manager, which is excellent news..

Barrie notes that it is a pleasure to come to Berwick station where the staff make you most welcome and are always ready to help customers.

"New" Treasurer

After our advert in the last newsletter for a Treasurer, RAGES is very pleased to say that a volunteer has come forward. Ian Bowman, one of our first members, has agreed to be our Treasurer. Ian was our previous and first Treasurer from 1999 to 2004. It is hoped that he will be formally elected at our next AGM..

Local Rail Study

It had been hoped that this issue of *The Rages Rag* would have been able to give the outcome of the MVA Consultancy study into the local rail service between Edinburgh and Berwick.

However, before releasing the study, it was sent to Transport Scotland for comments. They have raised some points which SEStran and the Councils are pursuing with the Consultants. It is now expected that the study will be released some time in September.

Accordingly this issue has only two pages.