

The Rages Rag

Newsletter of Rail Action Group, East of Scotland
Issue No. 6 - July 2000

RAGES first AGM

The first Annual General Meeting of RAGES was held on 10 May 2000 in the West Barns Bowling Club, West Barns, Dunbar.

Our Chairman, Tom Thorburn, welcomed members on behalf of the committee and intimated nine apologies.

The minutes of the Inaugural Meeting held on 13 January 1999 were approved.

Résumé of the first year

The Chairman said that members had been kept well informed via The Rages Rag newsletter. He highlighted the following points:

- Dunbar has fared better than our other main areas of attention - four new trains and the reinstatement of one
- On the Reston and East Linton fronts, we have carried out a lot of investigative work and consulted with the two relevant Councils
- North Berwick has also seen an input with the forthcoming 150th Anniversary Celebrations

The Group had acted on all correspondence, whether it was by letter or verbal.

Tom concluded by saying that the committee encourages members to write - whether it be an idea, a complaint or a piece for publication in the RAG.

Chairman's Report

Tom Thorburn indicated that he had thoroughly enjoyed the past year as Chairman and registered the pleasure that it had been to work with such a fine, motivated and enthusiastic committee. He thanked each committee member individually. He also thanked the members, because

without their support, the committee would or could not achieve what they do. RAGES intends to vigorously campaign to meet all of its Aims and Objectives and more in the coming years. Finally, he thanked the politicians at national and local level for all their support throughout this first year.

Vice Chairman's Report

Concentrating mainly on the North Berwick service, James King drew attention to the following points:

- Earlier morning services are needed to enable better connections with Glasgow services
- More evening services are needed to fill in the gaps after the 18:14 hrs service from Waverley
- Newer stock is to be introduced with reduced seating capacity compared with the current 305 units. Over crowding is already happening on rush hour trains. If longer trains are to be introduced at such times then platform lengthening is required at both North Berwick and Drem
- Fare collection is still a problem Does the resulting reduction in revenue imply less future investment in the service?
- Parking and security is still a problem - more CCTV is needed. More car parking and bicycle storage is required
- In the future the East Coast Main Line will be even more congested, but RAGES will continue to fight for enhanced and integrated services
- A membership campaign on the North Berwick service had been started with promising results

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Local Service

At the last committee meeting, it was decided that RAGES should write to the Train Operating Companies around our area to ask if they would consider a local service from Edinburgh to Berwick-upon-Tweed (and possibly Newcastle), which would eventually call at re-opened East Linton and Reston stations.

It was suggested that these services could be provided by suitable multiple units, which could free up early morning/late evening 225's - Newcastle/Edinburgh/Newcastle.

Their replies will be published in the next issue.

Golden opportunity

The Scottish Executive requested the general public to tell them how to spend "their" £17.7 billion of budget allocation? Subsequently Mr Prescott has announced a further £80 billion for transport over the next ten years. Please write to pass on the message that we want more stations, better trains and service frequency etc.

- Financial Controller, Area 3-8, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ
- Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott MP, House of Commons,

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

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The editor invites contributions which should be sent to him at the address at the foot of page 4.

Annual General Meeting

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- The following points arose in subsequent discussion.
- There are bottlenecks at Waverley, so more passing loops are needed. Can the new loop at Wallyford be retained as such?
- Why not identify all possible loops between Waverley and Dunbar?
- Telephone connections on trains are essential
- We must collaborate with other rail action groups, which was beginning to happen through SESTAR

Secretary's Report

Ralph Jordinson reminded the meeting that RAGES had its origin in some informal meetings between Ralph and Tom Thorburn in summer 1998, when they were put in touch with each other by David Hansen of Railway Development Society (Scotland). Activities had expanded greatly since the formal inauguration of RAGES in January 1999. Like all secretaries much of his work is doing the minutes of the committee meetings. He also conducts correspondence with our MP/MSP, John Home Robertson, a great supporter of ours, as well as ministers of the Scottish Executive, local councillors and Council officials.

Much of the correspondence has been reactive, i.e. responding to events/situations which may threaten or inhibit the potential for rail development. Examples of these had been:

- The proposed development of the Abbeyhill loop
 - Selling or leasing the car-park at East Linton station
- In fact much of RAGES work has been reactive but we are looking forward to adopting a strong pro-active stance on lines similar to that of our fellow organisation Capital Rail Action Group.

We shall be applying for funding from appropriate bodies to cover the rising costs of our activities.

We want to see an integrated public transport service with buses calling at railway stations to set down and pick up rail passengers. There must adequate and secure parking space for both car and cycle users at all stations.

In short, RAGES will keep on working to achieve its Aims and Objectives and mobilise public opinion and support throughout the area.

Treasurer's Report

The Statement of Income and Expenditure showed a profit of £65.56. Our thanks are due to Christine McArthur for auditing the books.

Ian Bowman also commented as follows:

We have been fortunate in the past year by getting paper, printing and photocopying done free of charge - while this continues we should remain solvent.

We are about to renew our membership of Transform Scotland which will cost £20. This should have been the fee last year but as a new group we were allowed to join for £10.

Committee members represent us regularly at meetings and to do so they have to rearrange work commitments or take time off, in addition to travelling to the meetings. In

future, if funds allow, it is hoped that we would be able to cover any expenses incurred by them.

In conclusion, Ian said that he believed the aims of the group could be achieved with the committee's leadership and determination.

In the following discussion Roger Burley suggested that the subscription be increased. Tom replied by saying that the committee did not wish to increase the subscription too much for fear of putting off people. However Judy Hayman commented that some award-giving bodies would certainly look at how much income is generated by the group and this should be born in mind. Tom said that the Campaign for Borders Rail had received from £2,800 from Awards for All and their annual subscription was only £2.50.

Other grades of membership were suggested, e.g. family membership.

The meeting approved a motion, proposed by Glenn Moulding, that allowed the committee to increase subscriptions by an amount not exceeding £3.00, i.e. up to £5.00.

Membership Report

Russell Darling announced that by the end of March, RAGES had 125 members, 53 of whom had renewed their subscription for this year. In addition, 15 new members had joined.

Referring to the newsletter, The Rages Rag, he commented that five had been produced so far. He encouraged members to send in contributions.

The web site had only a few visitors to date, but he was re-designing the site. (Ed - see elsewhere in this issue)

Finally, he thanked all those who had supported him in printing material.

Other points

All the current committee members had indicated their willingness to stand again, and as no other members had come forward for election, they were re-elected.

Amendments to the Constitution were approved. (Ed - copies of the new version are distributed with this newsletter.)

Tom thanked Ian Bowman for hosting all the committee meetings.

Roger Burley advised the meeting that Dunbar station was now on the GNER web site.

The committee was asked about the possibility of allowing the group to set up an information panel on each station to disseminate RAGES information. Tom said that he would discuss this matter at the meeting with ScotRail.

GNER will have ticket collectors to pick up fare dodgers.

The Chairman thanked the West Barns Bowling Club for providing the venue for the AGM free of charge.

After the meeting, the guest speaker, John Denning, gave his address, entitled 'A Personal View of Rail'. A summary is given on page 3.

A Personal View of Rail

John Denning - East Lothian Council

I have campaigned actively for rail for 30 years. I am delighted about the formation of RAGES and pleased to see so many here tonight. It is a pleasant contrast with the poor attendances at campaigns against rail closures years ago.

Nowadays people do want better public transport and do not want necessarily to travel in buses all the time. Journeys into Edinburgh by bus are painful and it is understandable why car owners wish to use their vehicles to get into Edinburgh. But the love affair of the public with their cars is still very much with us and this will have to change. Politicians will have to give a lead.

Rail transport is not cheap - it requires much capital investment. It must be used regularly... not just when it happens to be convenient! The early rail engineers saw East Lothian as an area to be got through-quickly! Major towns like Musselburgh and Haddington were served by branch lines. But today East Lothian is booming: its population will be 100,000 within the next 15 years. It is a good place to live in and Edinburgh will provide work for many East Lothian citizens. But Edinburgh is approaching gridlock and the city has little rail infrastructure. More cars into the capital is not the answer and congestion charging is on the way.

More trains are needed. The number of Dunbar commuters is growing and people do not want to travel on the 106 bus! But the East Coast Main Line is all we have and GNER and Virgin want to run more trains on it. ScotRail want to run trains to Dunbar and combine these with an

enhanced service to North Berwick. The ECML will become even more crowded and neither GNER or Virgin wish to run local services. There is scope for increasing track capacity between Waverley and Musselburgh, also for quadrupling track from Wallyford to Prestonpans.

One possible relief for ECML congestion in East Lothian might be to insert a chord from the North Berwick branch, north of Drem, to the ECML, meeting it to the east of Drem station. This would permit flexibility in the running of trains from Waverley to Dunbar, via North Berwick, without calling again at Drem and vice versa.

Such improvements, however, do not really cater for intending passengers from Haddington, Tranent or Gifford. It seems, therefore, that there is a strong case for constructing a supertram service between Haddington and Edinburgh.

There is only a limited amount of money available and I wonder if some of the finance likely to be earmarked for the Borders rail project could be diverted into providing the additional rail infrastructure required in East Lothian. This is not to say that the Borders should not be connected to the rail network but it could be done more cheaply than by the current proposals.

Finally some measure of overall control is needed to ensure the integration of public transport services. It is essential for bus and rail to coincide at stations; if a train or bus is late then the control could take care of the situation.

Virgin's 2020 Vision

Virgin recently published their vision for the East Coast Main Line. The summary below is extracted from their publicity leaflet.

The Virgin Stagecoach bid to replace the franchise for the East Coast Main Line plans to overcome the limited horizons of the current route upgrade plans by creating a high speed line which will bring a step-change in the quality and attractiveness of rail travel in this country.

The bid centres upon:

- The construction of 120 miles of new high speed line (HSL) - Peterborough to Doncaster (bypassing both)
- Electrification of some existing lines
- A number of new stations
- The purchase of brand new trains including a fleet of 205mph high speed trains (Virgin à Grande Vitesse - VGV)

The milestones, which are relevant to RAGES area, to achieve this are:

- 2003
- Stretched Super Voyager fleet replacing current HST's

- Faster Anglo-Scottish trains
- 2005
- New VGV fleet
- Additional services on the Anglo-Scottish routes
- Refurbished 225's available for other services
- 2009
- HSL opens and 205 mph services start
- Railtrack completes current upgrade
- VGV fleet expanded
- Diesel haulage of VGV's north of Edinburgh
- 2013
- Service frequency uplifts

To ensure timely and cost effective project delivery, Bechtel have joined forces with Virgin Stagecoach, exclusively, to create the high speed line. Railtrack will be invited to manage the new line alongside its existing (upgraded) lines.

Journey times from London to Edinburgh are quoted as improving from a current typical of 4hr20 to 3hr15.

North Berwick Service

The North Berwick service has been particularly poor of late, with many cancellations and serious delays. As a result of the unacceptable level of service RAGES has held a number of meetings with ScotRail's Managing Director and senior management about much needed improvements to it. The good news is that Scotrail has started to address our requirements (and recognises the need for more action), but the bad news is that the substantial improvements we need will have to wait until the new trains arrive in May 2001. Until then we have been told we will have to soldier on with our unreliable 40 year old class 305 units as no alternatives are presently available. We can only hope they are maintained better than of late!

What we need

- * New trains
- * More trains in the evenings
- * An earlier service in the morning
- * Better communication when things go wrong e.g. on-board phone and improved station announcements
- * More comprehensive fare collection
- * Increased on-board capacity
- * CCTV coverage at all stations
- * More car parking

ScotRail's response

May 2001 at the latest
Under active consideration
Likely from May 2001
The "long-line" station announcement service has now been transferred to the CCTV control centre. On-board emergency phones are under active consideration
Action has already been taken with more to follow
Six coach trains will run on peak services from May 2001
Agreed. Will be implemented in next nine months
In discussions with local council

Where to address your complaints to ScotRail:

Mr A. Tough, Passenger Services Manager (East), Waverley Station, Edinburgh EH1 1BB.

Train and fares information: 0845 748 4950.

North Berwick - 150 and not out

Around 200 people gathered on the platform at North Berwick on Saturday 17 June to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Edinburgh to North Berwick railway line.

One of the modern sliding door 90mph class 318 electric multiple units, which will eventually replace the current stock, was specially made available to run the 11:37hrs service to North Berwick. Dignitaries from East Lothian Council and North Berwick Community Council were piped

on board at Waverley.

At North Berwick, the train was named 'The North Berwick Flyer 1850 - 2000' by the Provost of East Lothian, Pat O'Brien.

Local dramatic society members were dressed in period costume and there was a civic reception and musical entertainment.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose

Residents of and visitors to North Berwick complained about the poor train service between North Berwick and Edinburgh. The 10.40am train to the city was a disgrace. Passengers had to get out at Drem and wait for a connection. The 7.40am train was even worse, as passengers had to wait

45 minutes at Drem. A strong letter was written to British Railways by the Town Clerk in an endeavour to get more through trains.

The Courier - 50 years ago.

Web site

The RAGES web site has changed from Compuserve to BTinternet. Please update your membership card to:

<http://www.kylemore.btinternet.co.uk/rages.htm>

all letters should be in lower case for the web site URL.

We now have a separate e-mail address:

RAGES@btinternet.com

Membership

We now have over 150 members from around the counties. Welcome to the many new North Berwick members.

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.