

RAIL ACTION GROUP, EAST OF SCOTLAND (RAGES)

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT EAST LINTON COMMUNITY HALL ON THURSDAY 21st SEPTEMBER 2023

Chairman Barrie Forrest BEM opened the meeting by welcoming Members to the meeting and the two guest speakers. He read out the apologies that had been received.

Committee Members present: - Barrie Forrest BEM; Ian Bowman; Allison Cosgrove; Tom Dickson; Tom Flanagan and Tom Thorburn.

In Attendance: Russell Darling; Robert Samson, Transport Focus; Jim Carnie; Alan Mackie; Mary Hastings; Bill Torrance; Judith Priest; G Leenan; Peter Forsyth; Norma Forsyth; Peter Foreman; Danny Wight; Simon Kelly (non-member); Ron Eeles (non-member); Alison Tossell.

Apologies were tendered by: - Glenn Moulding; Stewart Leslie; Martin Garvey; Ron McLean; John Lamont MP; Peter Meadows; Clinton Leeks; Ian Aitchison; Christine Grahame MSP; Logan Inglis; Jacquie Bell; Patrick Hanson.

1. The Chairman introduced Guest Speaker, Graham Meiklejohn, Head of Regional Development at Trans Pennine Express (TPE).

Graham was pleased to speak previously after the opening of Reston Station and will be pleased to return on the opening of East Linton Station. There are two items for the presentation: Stabilising TransPennine Express and Serving East Coast Stations. Graham apologised for the failings of TPE and the difficult impact that had for people not being able to attend work, appointments and leisure events.

TPE are keen to reset relationships and improve efficiency and reliability. The key aim is to reduce cancellations, there was no overtime agreement with train drivers which led to the majority of cancellations. This is providing the headroom to make progress and improve the training backlog which has reduced from 5,000 days to 3,500 days. 63% of drivers now have route knowledge compared to 50% on day of transfer to Operator of Last Resort, i.e. the Department of Transport.

The December timetable change will allow improvements but will result in changes to the core network between York and Manchester. Services will be reinstated at the December 2024 timetable. No changes to Newcastle/Edinburgh or WCML. This will provide a stable platform to allow 100% of drivers to be fully trained. A stable operation will allow marketing with special offers through 2024 and encourage passengers to return.

Vision is to deliver premium, sustainable and reliable connectivity across the network for everyone. Stabilise to Dec '24, re-engage to Dec '27 and transform to Dec '32. Full reinstatement of timetable on Sundays from 17th September. Aim is to provide customers with a premium experience. Providing economic and social return and embrace the digital railway. There will be a general upgrade of stations building up to transformation.

Transformation will mean new trains, new depots, extension of electrification, rescope timetable. Decarbonisation of the network will be realised. Reset timetable in December, stabilise TPE, provide reliability and economic benefit. Agreement in place to serve East Coast stations, in discussions with Transport Scotland on the future, post June 2024. Potential six-month extension to December 2024 due to recast of whole ECML timetable with other operating companies.

TPE will match ScotRail on peak fares removal from October 2023 – March 2024, includes stations from Edinburgh Waverley to Reston. The forthcoming opening of East Linton is another RAGES success story. All TPE services will call at East Linton, already provision in the timetable.

The Chairman asked the first question of the peak fare from Reston. Graham to come back on the question.

Question and compliment, TPE seats more comfortable but cycle provision poor, not possible to lift bikes, including e-bikes, on the hooks provided. How will timetable reset affect services from Reston? Graham said cycle issue are the same across Hitachi trains, competing space for seating or cycles. No solution to suit everyone, will have to wait until procurement of new trains. The reset will allow more trains to run on the core route between Manchester and Leeds. Two options for Reston: TPE want Edinburgh to Liverpool or Newcastle extended north or south.

Further question on new platforms which result in step from train to platform. GM responded standard design of platforms, need standardisation of rolling stock. Ewan Tait explained the ScotRail position of level boarding, will come with procurement of new trains, dropping the floor on the train and extended step.

Tom Dickson asked whether TPE extended service could stop/start at Glasgow? GM said it would depend on ECML timetable but crew based in Glasgow, currently travel to Edinburgh by taxi, so would make a lot of sense. Lots of issues to factor into the discussion.

Allison Cosgrove welcomed reduction of cancellations at Reston, usage still up to 15,000 as RailFuture forecast was 18,000, so will hopefully grow. GM responded that figures are remarkable given challenges and Reston will be huge success story.

Concerned that no date yet on opening of East Line station. Leader of ELC, Cllr Norman Hampshire has said it needs to be open by start of next financial year. GM would concur with that but can't yet give a specific date. Network Rail will determine when the station can be safely opened.

2. The Chairman introduced Guest Speaker, Ewan Tait, Business Development Executive at ScotRail.

Ewan presented on the Success of the Borders Railway. An image illustrated the extensive network in 1896 which had reduced considerably by 1996. Delivered 2 trains per hour during day, hourly in the evening. Cross Edinburgh direct services in the peaks, more seating as route bedded in. As former FM Nicola Sturgeon said, it opened up exciting possibilities.

Promoting accessibility to/from Midlothian and Edinburgh from the Borders. Arrest decline in Borders' population and create modal shift from car to public transport, supporting the reduction in car km. The railway allowed greater access to job opportunities.

Borders Railway had a Blueprint Partnership that provides examples for other projects. Outcomes included 8% increase in tourism employment, 4% in Midlothian, 16% increase in tourism spend in Borders 6.8% in Midlothian. New investment in industry, 200 new jobs and £100m economic impact. Great outcomes for people and communities including new housing/development land along with skills training.

Now a great destination to visit which has encouraged Steam Train Experience Pilot, Great Tapestry Visitor Centre and other attractions. 300,000 journeys in the first 10 weeks of

service, 40,000 car journeys saved annually. 65% of visitors using the railway saying it was a key factor in their visit. Forecast of 1.2m passengers in first year, actual was 1.3m so exceeded expectations. Now identified 5 distinct markets served by the Borders Railway along the route. Future objectives include more services calling at Stow, longer trains, extending the service and moving to zero carbon by 2035.

The Chair thanked Ewan for the presentation and invited questions. Tom Thorburn thought the presentation was very interesting and engaging with the community doesn't seem to have happened at Reston or East Linton. Numbers are impressive but could be even better if booking system could be improved.

Allison Cosgrove thanked Ewan for an excellent presentation, seen the difference the railway has made for residents and students coming up to QMU.

Alan asked about arrangements for growth in population along the route through East Lothian. Ewan confirmed that additional capacity has been provided and ScotRail continue to look at accommodating the new travel patterns at East Lothian stations.

Jim asked about Platform 7 at Waverley Station, trains parking well to the east. Ewan explained that arrangements need to be made to manage the arrival of rolling stock on platforms and possible coupling-up.

The Chair thanked Ewan for the presentation.

3. Minutes of AGM Held at Knox Academy, Haddington on Thursday 29TH September 2022.

The minutes were moved by Jim Carnie and seconded by Russell Darling, accepted by the meeting.

4. Chairman's Report - Barrie Forrest BEM (BF)

I start by giving thanks to all our members who have supported Rages over the years and members who have recently joined the group without your support we would not have been able to achieve the opening of Reston Station and East Linton in a few weeks Membership is what politicians ask for when we ask for their support in our campaign to improve rail services and opening new stations, including the branch line from Longniddry to Haddington to have Haddington Station opened, to which I also thank our local Councillors

Over the last year Rages were invited and attended a number of events to give presentations on the building of Reston Station. We attended Rail Future Scotland AGM, Reston Church Guild, Duns Probus Club, Berwick Probus Club, St Abbs Lifeboat Gala Day, Ayton Church Fete, Ayton Flower Show, and Aln Valley Railway, and we have our Rages stall at Haddington every month at the Farmers Market.

Sadly, due to strikes and industrial action train services have been cancelled throughout the year, Reston has suffered most with TPE being the main train operator calling at Reston, LNER provide an early morning service and a later evening service which have been reliable except for strike days. In the last month TPE service have shown a big improvement. As I said we continue to meet with politicians from all parties and representatives from LNER, Cross Country, ScotRail and TPE. Graham Meiklejohn, TPE Head of Regional Development who we have met on a number of times has been most helpful. We were very dissatisfied with Cross Country the way they did not inform us about the reduction of services to Dunbar and we are stressing we want a face-to-face meeting. We attended a meeting in the Maltings at Berwick opposing the closure of Berwick Station Ticket office.

I would have like to be standing here tonight saying what a great day we had at the opening of East Linton Station BUT just be patient for a few weeks and I am sure we can have a day to celebrate and remember.

I would also like to thank all my colleagues on Rages Committee also Hon President Tom Thorburn and Russell Darling. I give thanks to Harold Vox who is retiring from representative for Drem and North Berwick. I want to give a special thanks to Tom Dickson our Vice Chairman Tom has prepared and given our presentations, memberships, and taken the minutes when our secretary has given his apologies.

In June Rages were asked to attend the Rail Future User Group Awards 22-23 in London to receive an award not knowing what it would be for but we were ask to give a presentation after other groups had given their presentations it was Rages turn. Tom Dickson gave the presentation including the forming of Rages to the present-day achievements. Then Tom and Myself were presented with the Best Campaign Gold Award in Recognition of your contribution to Rail Campaigning to Rail Action Group East of Scotland from Christian Wolmar President of Rail Future. This is a fantastic honour for Rages to which we are very proud.

Thanks again to all for supporting Rages and attending our AGM.

5. Secretary's Report – Tom Flanagan

The Committee has been very active again over the last year pursuing the objectives of advocacy, influencing and campaigning.

It has very much been a year of transition for the rail industry building back after the pandemic and attempting to encourage passengers back onto the railway. RAGES has been both supporting and challenging to the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) as they have tried to improve services generally and across the East of Scotland in particular.

In truth, there has been a mixed picture of success and it fair to say that the jury is still out. LNER are reporting the greatest success with passenger numbers now at 110% of pre-pandemic levels. ScotRail is in the order of 93% but this varies greatly by route and day as travel patterns have changed with commuting traffic focused on Tuesday-Thursday with the busiest day now being Saturday constituting leisure trips.

The two big concerns have been the withdrawal of Cross-Country Services from Dunbar and the reliability of TPE (Trans-Pennine Express) following the withdrawal of the franchise from First Group and its transfer to the Operator of Last Resort, essentially the Department for Transport. Reliability is slowly improving but the incessant cancellations earlier in the year have led to a loss of confidence in passengers returning to rail, particularly from Reston. RAGES will continue to work with the TOCs to improve quality and efficiency on the East Coast Main Line routes and the return of Cross-Country services to Dunbar.

RAGES is a non-party political organisation and we maintain good relations with politicians from all parties to further our aims. We attend the regular rail roundtable meetings hosted by Paul McLennan MSP with East Lothian Council and partners. We have received support for the reinstatement of the Haddington branch line from Martin Whitfield MSP and Craig Hoy MSP has been instrumental in raising the issue in the Scottish Parliament and securing a meeting with the Transport Minister. However, with the swift changes of Transport Minister in recent months, that meeting has yet to take place although we are hopeful of meeting the new Minister, Fiona Hyslop MSP, in the near future.

It would also be remiss of me not to mention the support from Kenny MacAskill MP, on the issue of the withdrawal of Cross-Country services from Dunbar. Although, with having to deal with Whitehall and Westminster it seems a case of “banging head against a brick wall”.

We await the conclusion of the East Lothian Access study STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance) which looks at 4 tracking requirements on the ECML, new stations at Blindwells and Haddington, the completion of the construction of East Linton station and diversion/closure of Markle Level Crossing. Once this is acknowledged by Transport Scotland then a meeting with the Minister may be forthcoming.

The RAGES stall at Haddington Farmers Market continues to be very popular and we have taken the stall ‘on tour’ this year to visit such places as St Abbs, Ayton and the Aln Valley Railway Festival.

The Committee continues to be a collaborative effort and I have welcomed the support of my colleagues during a busy period in keeping things ‘on track’. I am sure the coming year will be no less busy with the forthcoming opening of East Linton station and the Committee pressing for further improvements in rail provision across our patch.

6. Membership Secretary’s Report – Tom Dixon

Membership

At the time of presenting this report our subscribing membership stands at 229. There are still 33 members to renew, the cut-off date for renewal is the end of this month. Therefore, our membership could be around 196 at the end of the month. These figures include 3 honorary members.

However, the subscribing members of RAGES doesn’t present a complete picture of our membership profile. Taking into account non-paying members and social media followers raises our membership profile to 1132.

RAGES has 6 corporate members, 5 of which are community councils.

Ayton Community Council
Tweed Valley Railway Campaign
Dunpender Community Council
Dunbar Community Council
Haddington and District Community council
Reston And Auchencrow Community Council

We continue to attend the monthly Haddington Farmers Market and have also attended various local events throughout the year. Although it looks like there could be up to 33 members who will not be renewing their membership, this will have been largely offset by the 26 new members who have joined as a result of attending local events in the area.

The use of bank transfer as a method of subscription payment continues to be a more popular method of payment. 73% of members now pay by this method.

Membership (based on 229 members) breakdown by station is as follows:

Station	Value	%	Station	Value	%
Reston	86	37.6	Longniddry	4	1.7
Haddington	34	14.8	Prestonpans	4	1.7
Dunbar	29	12.7	Musselburgh	3	1.3
East Linton	23	10.0	Salisbury	2	0.9

Drem	8	3.5	Galashiels	1	0.4
Edinburgh	8	3.5	Morpeth	1	0.4
North Berwick	8	3.5	Tweedbank	1	0.4
Berwick Upon Tweed	6	2.6	Wallyford	1	0.4

Communication

Most member updates such as newsletters and e-rags are done by email. This has significantly reduced our costs in terms of postage.

Only 22 members now receive updates by post.

Software

Over the last three years or so, there has been a huge amount of work done in the background trying to find a suitable and cost-effective solution for storing and managing our membership database and, also for bulk emailing to our members. I am pleased to report that we have now settled on membermojo for our membership and emails.

The design and development work involved in setting up the current and past systems has all been done by one of our members, Russell Darling. RAGES owe a huge debt of gratitude to Russell for devoting hundreds of hours of his own time in developing and setting up our membership systems. I might add that in addition to doing this work, Russell also manages and updates our website.

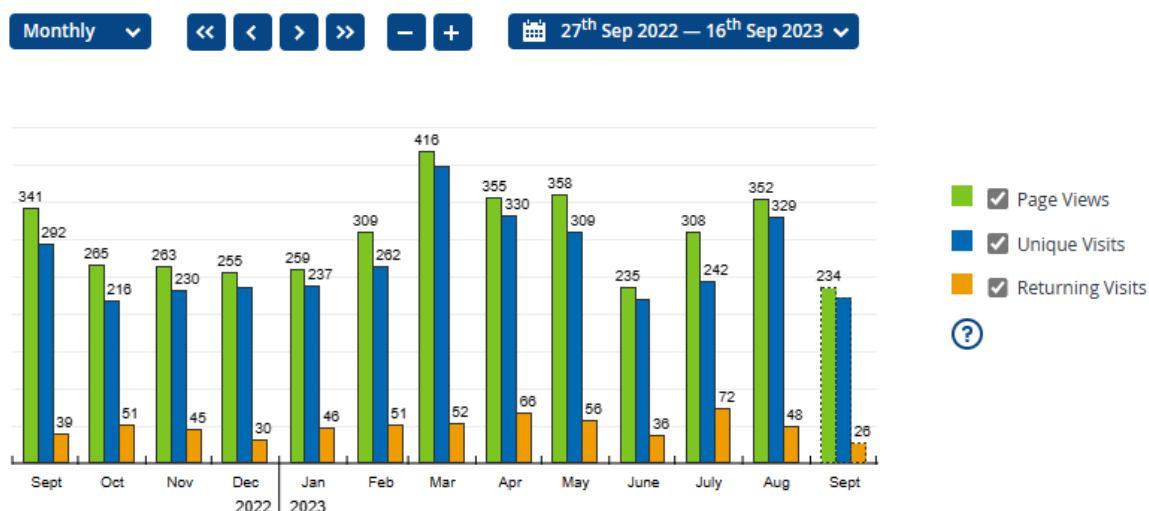
Web Site

Our web site continues to be updated regularly, thanks to Russell Darling.

Over the twelve-month period from the end of September 2022 we have had around 4000 page views, which averages out at 77 per week. This is considerably less than the previous twelve-month period, but there was a huge interest in May 2022 when Reston Station opened, and an e-rag was sent with a link to a web page of the day's happenings.

The web site has been regularly updated with the progress of the new station at East Linton. Selected images showing the progress can be seen on the web site with the latest at the top of the web page and captions below each photograph.

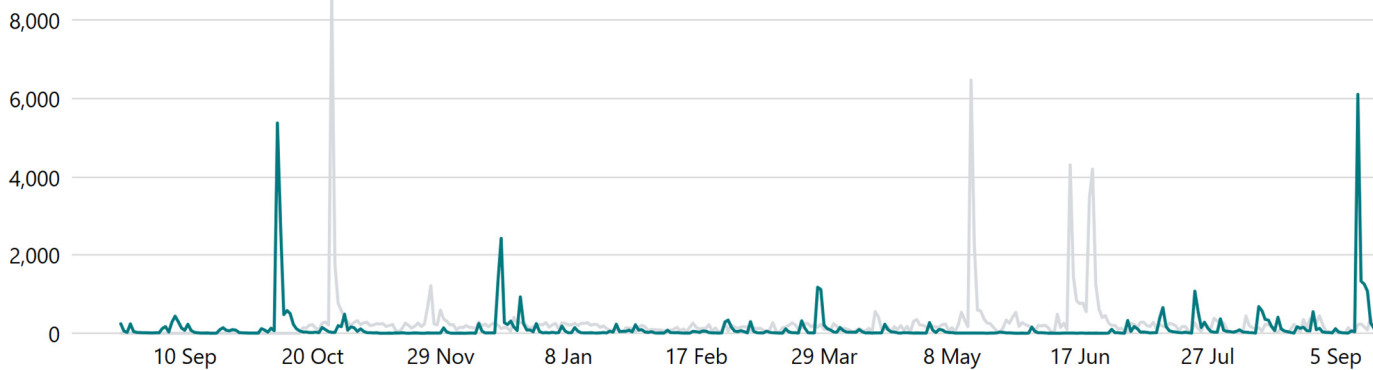
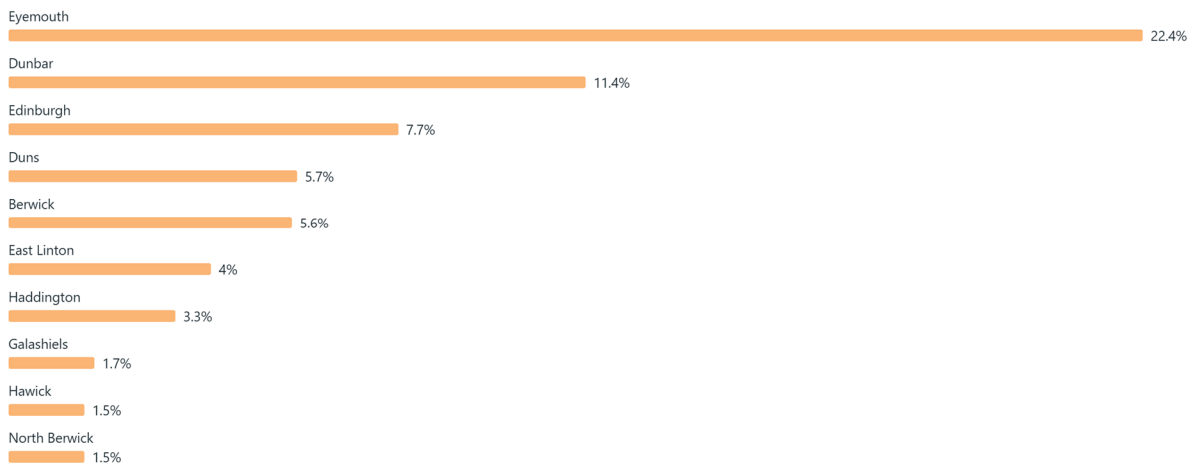
The bar graph below shows the monthly figures for the last year:



Facebook

Our Facebook page continues to attract a lot of interest from users of social media and is updated regularly with progress at East Linton and Haddington farmers Market, this has allowed us to reach out to a wider group of people and to provide a broader content of transport related issues. We have 826 followers of our RAGES Facebook page.

Top towns/cities

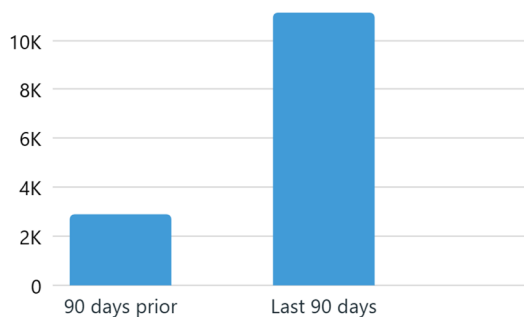


Reach

Post reach ⓘ

11.2K ↑ 285.6%

Total from last 90 days vs 90 days prior

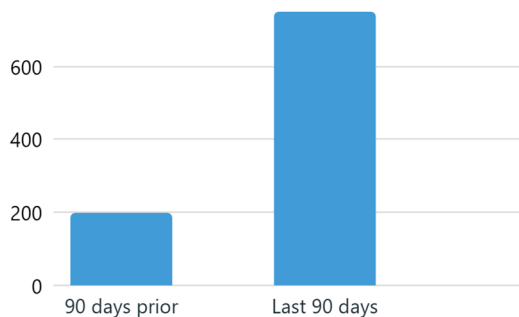


Engagement

Post reactions, comments and shares ⓘ

751 ↑ 279.3%

Total from last 90 days vs 90 days prior



Title	Type	Date published ↑↓	Reach ⓘ ↓	Likes and reactions ⓘ ↑↓	Sticker taps ⓘ ↑↓
 East Linton Railway Station update 09/10/2022 -... Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES)	Boost post	Post	9 Oct 2022	8.7K Accounts Centre accou... Reactions	--
 East Linton update 11/09/2023. The site is finall... Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES)	Boost post	Post	12 September 10:35	8.2K Accounts Centre accou... Reactions	--
 East Linton update 16/12/2022. The station con... Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES)	Boost post	Post	17 Dec 2022	5.3K Accounts Centre accou... Reactions	--
 East Linton Railway Station update 27/03/2023 -... Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES)	Boost post	Post	27 March 20:27	2.8K Accounts Centre accou... Reactions	--
 Railfuture is the UK's leading independent orga... Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES)	Boost post	Post	23 July 17:34	1.7K Accounts Centre accou... Reactions	--
 East Linton is now on the ScotRail network map ... Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES)	Boost post	Post	14 September 14:18	1.3K Accounts Centre accou... Reactions	--
 Reston is finally starting to get the road signage... Rail Action Group, East of Scotland (RAGES)	Boost post	Post	12 August 21:07	1.3K Accounts Centre accou... Reactions	--

Twitter (@RailActionGrpES)

We continue to regularly update our Twitter account. This has also allowed us to reach a different set of social media users.

7. Treasurer's Report – Ian Bowman

RAGES Balance Sheet for Year Ending 31 March 2023

The group's bank balance at the start of the 2022/23 financial year was £1636.25.

We had membership income of £984.00 from 226 ordinary members and eight corporate members. Members gave donations totalling £254.00 and £97.50 came from selling teas and coffees at East Linton Community Fair giving a total income for the year of £1335.50.

Total expenditure for the year was £1377.63 and is detailed below: -

We paid a total of £95.00 for 100 second class postage stamps and 250 envelopes. To print RAGES flyers and leaflets was £267.80 and printing RAGES Rags cost £147.71. Updating the group's banners was £288.00.

Website support cost the group £50.00, the group's membership database subscription cost £75.00 and org.uk domain renewal was £25.18.

The permit for our stall at Haddington Farmers Market cost £56.00 and a gazebo and leaflet holders in support of the stall cost £181.90 and £18.30 respectively.

We paid £25.00 for Railfuture membership and £10 for TVRC membership. The cost of hiring halls for committee meetings was £93.00.

A member paid three £4.00 memberships and made three £1.00 donations in error and this £15.00 was refunded.

A cheque for £10 we received for membership, was presented to the bank and subsequently rejected.

We paid £10.75 for four tally counters for a passenger count and £8.99 for a projector cable to aid group presentations.

This year expenditure exceeded income by £42.13 and we closed the year with a bank balance of £1594.12.

**Statement of Income and Expenditure
For Year Ending 31 March 2023**

Bank Balance at 31 March 2022 **1636.25**

Income

Subscriptions	984.00	
Donations (Members)	254.00	
East Linton Community Fair	97.50	
	<u>1335.50</u>	

Expenditure

Postage Stamps & Envelopes	95.00
RAGES Flyers and Leaflets	267.80
Printing RAGES Rags	147.71
Updating RAGES Banners	288.00
Website Support	50.00
Membermojo Annual Sub.	75.00
.org.uk Domain Renewal	25.18
Haddington Farmers Market Stall	56.00
Gazebo for HFM Stall	181.90
Leaflet Holders	18.30
Railfuture Membership	25.00
Meeting Hall Hire	93.00
Tweed Valley Rail Campaign Memb.	10.00
Membership Refund	15.00
Returned Cheque	10.00
Tally Counters	10.75
Projector Cable	8.99
	<u>1377.63</u>

(42.13)

Represented by Bank Balance at 31 March 2023 **1594.12**

Audited and found to be correct from information provided:

Chris McArthur

8. Election of Office Bearers: -

The existing committee members intimated that they would all serve another year in their post. All existing members were duly re-elected.

9. AOCB

The Chair explained with the retirement of Harold Vox we need a representative for Drem and North Berwick, if anyone is interested, please get in touch. The Chair asked for any other business.

A question was raised from the audience: There is a big project on digitalisation of the line from Kings Cross to Peterborough, eliminate the congestion of trackside signalling and transfer signalling into the driver's cab. Marshall Meadows in Edinburgh have declined to make investment. Lack of line capacity on ECML so could benefit from upgrade to signalling. There could be massive savings in maintenance, so the lack of investment is a false economy. RAGES should raise with the politicians.

Allison suggested John Lamont and Kenny MacAskill should raise with Government the importance of rail, as the Prime Minister gives the impression he prefers air travel.

The Chair confirmed that RAGES would reinforce efforts to secure a meeting with the SG Transport Minister.

East Linton

Tom Dickson, Vice-Chair & Membership Secretary, provided a slide show to update on progress on the station construction along with his companion, cub reporter Oscar. Good progress being made and the project is now at an advanced stage with just a few lamp columns in the car park to be erected. A great difference can be seen with previous pictures taken at the station site.

Chairman Barrie Forrest closed the meeting by thanking all those members present for attending.