

RAIL ACTION GROUP, EAST OF SCOTLAND (RAGES)

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT KNOX ACCADEMY, HADDINGTON ON THURSDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER 2022

Committee Members present: - Barrie Forrest BEM; Stewart Leslie; Ian Bowman; Harald Vox; and Tom Thorburn.

Chairman Barrie Forrest BEM opened the meeting by welcoming Members to the meeting and asked for the apologies which were read out by the acting Secretary.

Apologies were tendered by: - Allison Cosgrove; Tom Dickson; Paul McLennan MSP; Jacquie Bell; John Lamont MP; John Dale; Alison Tymon; Barry Tymon; John Bannister; Peter Meadows; Atholl Innes; Ron McLean; Councillor Georgina Hill; Jenny Haines; Rev Bruce Neill; John Forrest; Jane Thorburn. There were no apologies from the floor.

The Chairman introduced Guest Speaker, Councillor John McMillan (Provost) East Lothian Council.

Councillor McMillan gave a talk/PowerPoint show on East Lothian Council's wide ranging Transport Strategies which included National, Regional and Local priorities to improve connectivity, deliver sustainable economic growth, climate change and healthier outcomes. Each of these topics were covered in detail before moving on to discuss the Local Transport Strategy (LTS). Apart from all the standard requirements, the important points borne out by the LTS of particular interest to RAGES were: -

- To promote integration and interchange between different means of travel;
- To maintain the transport network to a suitable standard to ensure it meets the needs of all users;
- East Lothian Access study STAG1 which looks at 4 tracking requirements, new stations at Blindwells and Haddington, the construction of East Linton station and diversion/closure of Markle Level Crossing;
- The three options for reconnection of Haddington. Use of the existing Branch Line, New link as part of High Speed Rail Link and Light Rail from Blindwells to Haddington.

A short question and answer session was followed by the Chair BF thanking Councillor McMillan for his very informative talk on East Lothian Council's Transport Strategy whereupon the Members showed their appreciation.

Chair's Report - Barrie Forrest BEM (BF)

BF welcomed members to our AGM.

This year has been a fantastic year for RAGES and myself with the opening of Reston Station on 23rd May. Throughout the construction we have enjoyed a great relationship with BAM Nuttall's staff and Scottish Borders Council's staff doing the access roads and car parks. The opening day itself was one to be remembered by not just myself but by our committee and members alike. It was really pleasing that Allan Brooking, Network Rail, and Graham Meiklejohn, TransPennine Express organised to take the Reston School children and nursery to Edinburgh on the second Transpennine Express northbound service. These children were all given goody bags, had a fantastic day out on the train and at the Scottish Museum – all in all a day to remember and a big thank you to Allan and Graham.

It is pleasing to see East Linton station is now under construction and hopefully we will see it opened some time in the second part of 2023.

I wish to thank all the committee members for all their continued work and support.

Secretary's Report

The Secretary's report was given by the Acting Secretary, Tom Thorburn (TT).

The pandemic this year again has caused us some restrictions. However, we have seen Reston Station constructed and opened, with a terrific opening day as said by our Chair. It is equally pleasing to see East Linton station under construction. The committee have very much upped the campaign see the branch line to Haddington reinstated with a new station in the town centre and a parkway station on the outskirts of the town by having a stall at Haddington farmers market.

We continue to work with TransPennine Express to see improvement of their services, with the Scottish Borders Council regarding signage and linking bus services to achieve a proper integrated transport system.

Treasurer's Report – Ian Bowman (IB)

IB outlined the account balance sheet to members.

The group's bank balance at the start of the 2021/2022 financial year was £1662.56.

We had membership income of £916.00 from 204 ordinary members and 10 corporate members. Members gave donations totaling £172.00 to the group giving a total income for the year of £1088.00.

Total expenditure for the year was £1114.31, this is broken down as follows: -

We paid £264.00 for 400 second class postage stamps and £161.32 for 250 RAGES flyers and 200 Haddington specific leaflets.

It cost £215.26 to print 475 RAGES rags.

For computer software support we paid £115.00 and group email provision cost the group £79.33. Our website support provider omitted to invoice us for the 2020/21 year, so the £100.00 cost is for two years.

Our pitch adjacent to Haddington Farmers Market cost £54.00 from March to December and a banner for our table at that stall was £62.40.

We paid £25.00 for Railfuture membership and £38.00 for the hire of halls for committee meetings.

This year expenditure exceeded income by £26.31 and we closed the year with a bank balance of £1636.25.

Please note the original of the Accounts Balance Sheet was signed and dated by the auditor, Chris McArthur.

RAIL ACTION GROUP EAST OF SCOTLAND

**Statement of Income and Expenditure
For Year Ending 31 March 2022**

Bank Balance at 31 March 2021 1662.56

Income

Subscriptions	916.00	
Donations (Members)	172.00	
		1088.00

Expenditure

Postage Stamps	264.00	
RAGES Flyers and Leaflets	161.32	
Printing RAGES Rags	215.26	
Computer Software Support	115.00	
Computer Website Support	100.00	
Group email Provision	79.33	
Haddington Farmers Market Stall	54.00	
RAGES Banner	62.40	
Railfuture Membership	25.00	
Meeting Hall Hire	38.00	
		1114.31
		26.31

Represented by Bank Balance at 31 March 2022 1636.25

Audited and found to be correct from information provided

Chris McArthur

Membership Report – Tom Dickson (TD)

Membership

Our membership has dropped quite a bit this year. Our membership currently stands at round about 160 from 239. This figure includes 3 honorary members and 32 new members. There are still some members who intend to renew their subscription.

This year the number of members who have not renewed is about 70. It is difficult to put this down to a particular reason, but I suspect that the current cost of living crisis and the cost of domestic gas and electricity is a significant factor causing members to count their pennies. Also, with the opening of Reston earlier this year and the start of construction of East Linton some members may think that they have done their bit and have chosen not to renew.

RAGES has 9 corporate members, 6 of which are community councils;

Ayton Community Council
Tweed Valley Railway Campaign
Coldingham Community Council
Dunpender Community Council
Dunbar Community Council
Haddington and District Community council
Reston And Auchencrow Community Council
T Tunnock Ltd
Sustaining Dunbar

This year we have started to attend the monthly Haddington Farmers Market, so far this has been a great success with the visitors to the market showing great engagement in our stall and has also resulted in several new members.

The use of bank transfer as a method of subscription payment continues to be a more popular method of payment, over 47% of members now pay by this method compared to 46% last year.

Membership breakdown by station is as follows;

	2022	2021
Reston	40%	↘ 52%
Dunbar	18%	↖ 14%
East Linton	9%	≈ 11%
Haddington	14%	↖ 4%
Drem	3%	↘ 4%
North Berwick	3%	= 3%
Berwick Upon Tweed	4%	≈ 3%
Other stations	9%	= 9%

Communication

Most of our members now have an email address and this significantly reduces the costs in communicating updates and newsletters to our members.

Software

Last year we moved our membership database and email system to a cloud based system. This system continues to be problematic and the email system unreliable in operation. Fortunately, we have continued to maintain our original PC based membership database. A decision will be made in the next month or so as to whether we continue with the cloud software or revert to the PC based software. For bulk emailing RAGES now uses MOOSEND and this application has been hugely successful and has significantly reduced the administration burden when sending out bulk emails.

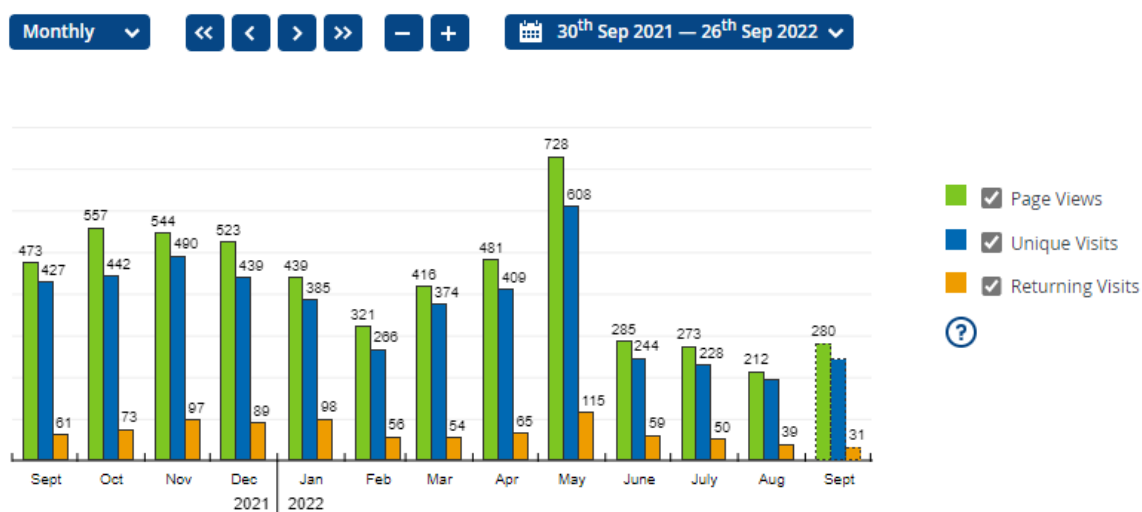
Web Site

Our web site continues to be updated regularly by Russell Darling.

Over the twelve-month period from the end of September 2021 we have had around 5000 page views, which averages out at 96 per week. This is more than the previous twelve-month period, but there was a huge interest in May 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 stations at Reston and 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.

Twitter (@RailActionGrpES)

This year we have also regularly updated our Twitter account. This has also allowed us to reach a different set of social media users.

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.

BF asked the members present if there was a volunteer for the Secretary's post. Tom Flanagan intimated that he would be interested. Tom was proposed by Jim Carnie and seconded by Mary Hastings.

Update of Constitution

The updated Constitution was discussed through with the members. The Constitution was accepted and approved after the following amendments were carried out: -

Aims 2. c) To promote rail as an environmentally friendly, sustainable and affordable mode of transport – Proposed by Tom Flanagan, Seconded by Gareth Morgan;

Objectives 3. A) To restore a rail connection to Haddington with the opening of one or more stations for Haddington, with all services running through to Edinburgh Proposed by Russel Darling, Seconded by John Tiffet.

AOCB

None

Chair BF closed the meeting by thanking Councillor John McMillan for arranging Knox Academy Assembly Room for the meeting.